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As unrest mounts, Turkey faces watershed moment

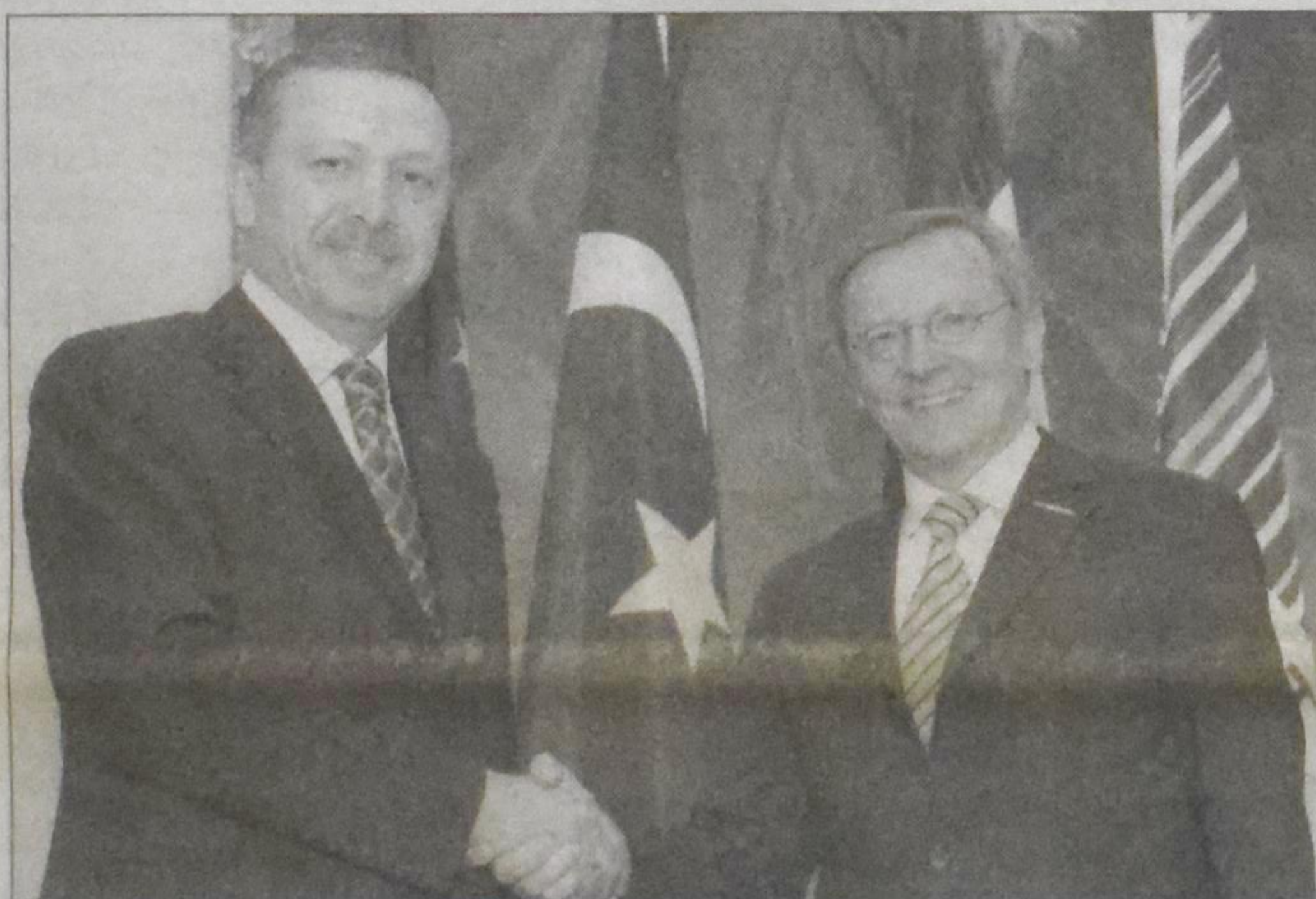
Harry der Nederlanden

Turkey is in the midst of a political crisis that sees the defenders of the secularist state in confrontation with a growing Islamist electorate. On the last weekend in April, almost one million protesters took to the streets in the capital city of Ankara in support of the secularist order established by Kemal Ataturk early in the 20th century. The demonstrations are in anticipation of elections for the country's prime minister.

The party that holds the majority of seats in parliament at present, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), is Islamist. The leader of the AKP and Prime Minister of the country, Tayyip Erdogan had announced his intention of running for the presidency. Although most of the political power is concentrated in the office of prime minister, the Turkish presidency carries a lot of prestige, and the president functions as the commander-in-chief of the army. Erdogan's announcement raised so much opposition that he withdrew and instead put forward his Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as his party's candidate for the presidency.

Since the AKP hold a strong majority of 353 seats in the 550-member parliament, if the elections proceed, he is almost sure to be elected. He needs a two-thirds majority to win on the first two rounds of voting, but after that a simple majority suffices.

Mr. Gul is hardly a flaming Islamist; in fact, he was put forward as a compromise candidate. He is a strong supporter of Turkey's membership in the EU. But he is a member of the AKP, and his wife insists on wearing her Islamic headscarf in a country where the headscarf is banned from schools and public offices. When Kemal Ataturk sought to extricate government from the influence and control of



Turkish P.M. Tayyip Erdogan being welcomed at EU

religious leaders, he erected a very strict separation between the state and the mosque. To many secularist Turks, the prospect of having a scarf-wearing woman in the presidential palace is a sure sign that the country is moving toward becoming an Islamist state.

Prime Minister Erdogan and other leaders of the AKP have consistently denied any intention to create an Islamist state like Iran or to implement sharia (Islamic law), but many fear the strict separation is being eroded. The secularist opposition in parliament challenged Mr. Gul's candidacy, and the Constitutional Court agreed, annulling the first round of voting. The army, which has intervened four times in the last 50 years to preserve the secularist state, issued a thinly veiled threat, declaring that it considers itself duty-bound to defend the secular constitution.

The army is a strong presence in Turkey not only in terms of historical precedent, but also because it is the largest army in Europe. In NATO it is second in size only to the U.S. army.

The Council of Europe condemned the military's intervention in no uncertain terms. "This state-

ment looks like a deliberate attempt

by the armed forces to influence the election of a new President in Turkey," said Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe. "In a democracy, the military are under the command of democratically elected State authorities. The armed forces do not have any democratic legitimacy of their own and therefore cannot have a political role."

"I am shocked that the military in a member state of the Council of Europe should behave in this way in the midst of a democratic and constitutional process such as the election of the Head of State."

So in the name of democracy, the E.U. is put in the position of opposing the secularist cause, for

the latter has been upheld by the elite and the army. Erdogan's Islamist party has won majority support from a growing constituency of traditionalist middle-class voters who want to see a greater degree of recognition for the Islamic religion and relaxation of headscarf laws.

Under the economically liberal regime of Prime Minister Erdogan (and the guidance of the International Monetary Fund), Turkey's economy has been booming, doubling in size over the last four years. The growing middle class is largely made up of devout Muslims who follow a disciplined Muslim lifestyle. Many of them would like to see changes

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Relocation of World War II statue sparks riots in Estonia

Harry der Nederlanden

During the last week of April, riots broke out in Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia, over – of all things – the relocation of a statue. The statue that precipitated the riots was part of a monument in a square near the city center marking the graves of several Russian soldiers. They were killed during World War II fighting the Nazis. From its prominent location, the statue is to be moved to a military cemetery.

The move provoked strong reaction not only from within the country but also from Russia. About one-third of Estonia's population is of Russian ethnic origin, and they see the demotion of the statue to an out-of-the-way spot as symbolic of their own marginalization in the country.

Russia took prompt action at the perceived insult, voting to punish Estonia by breaking diplomatic ties and imposing economic sanctions.



The Russian minority feels a right to be aggrieved now, but native Estonians also have grievances. To them the statue symbolizes decades of Russian oppression. Since its declaration of independence from Russia in 1991 at the break-down of the Soviet empire, Estonia has embarked on a course to recover its own national identity that was almost lost under the Russians.

Russia first invaded Estonia in 1940, after making a pact with Hitler. However, a year later Germany occupied the country, holding it till 1944, when the Soviet army rolled back the Nazis. Because of the harsh way the Russians had dealt with Estonia earlier, sending thousands to die in camps, many Estonians joined the

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News

In Nigeria's oil region militants are stepping up attacks

Scott Baldauf

Port Harcourt, Nigeria – With his small fleet of speedboats, hundreds of Kalashnikov-carrying militants, and a string of attacks on government and oil-company targets, Ateke Tom is a major reason for instability in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer and the fifth-largest supplier of crude to the US.

Critics call him a common criminal. Loyalists call him "godfather." The government calls him Nigeria's most wanted man.

But in an interview last week in his hideout among the mangrove swamps, Mr. Tom says he is fighting to ensure that the oil wealth that is pumped out of his region is used to develop his region.

Oil prices rose above \$64 a barrel May 3 after gunmen kidnapped at least 19 people – mostly foreign oil workers of various nationalities – in less than 24 hours. Whether militants loyal to Tom were behind the kidnappings is not known, but attacks like this have increased after last month's presidential and state elections, which were discredited by most observers, including the European Union and Nigeria's biggest election monitoring group.

"Our resources, as you know, they are spoiled by the government," says Mr. Tom, a militant commander, meeting a pair of reporters in a camp of ramshackle tents, surrounded by his personal bodyguards. "Everywhere in the Delta, we are suffering. All the promises, and they do nothing. We want schools, we want them to employ our people, we want lights and water, all those things. It is for this that we are fighting, for our freedom."

Will last month's elections help?

For good or for ill, the future stability of Nigeria may rest in the hands of men like Tom. A growing number of militant groups – including Tom's Niger Delta Vigilantes and a rival group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) – are kidnapping oil company employees, and attacking oil drilling and pumping installations to force the Nigerian central government to plow oil revenues back into the Niger Delta region. The recent elections

were intended to bring relief, but observers say the elections may only deepen the sense of alienation and hopelessness that many Niger Delta residents feel toward their government.

"People have realized their votes don't count," says Anyakwee Nsimovv, director of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Port Harcourt. "For the past nine months, people have been distancing themselves from the militants, but what does [Nigerian President Olusegun] Obasanjo do? He gives poverty instead of development. He gives bullets instead of bread. People realize these guys with guns are more effective, and sympathy is being built. And what do you get? Chaos."

While the kidnapping of the oil workers may be a signal of business as usual for the militants, this week's apparent kidnapping of the mother of Governor-elect Celestine Omehia may signal a new tactic of targeting elected officials.

"People are so upset, and if the elected officials take office, then there will be more and more people, especially the youth, that will start going after officials," he says. "People can't accept the ballot, and [they] will start to use self-help – the AK-47 – against the politicians who do not care about them except at election time."

First vice president from the Delta

While most Delta residents see the past elections as hopelessly flawed by the ruling People's Democratic Party, some observers say that the inclusion of Niger Delta politician Goodluck Jonathan as the vice president-elect is a sign that Nigeria's political class may finally give serious attention to a problem of regional alienation that has brewed for decades. Niger Delta politicians say they are awaiting a fuller discussion of the new government's announced "plan" to resolve the Niger Delta issue, from development to the control of resources.

Yet few here are holding their breath for dramatic changes.

On paper, a bustling region like the Niger Delta should be prosperous. The gross domestic product of the three top

oil-producing states – Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa – are equal to that of a growing central European country like Croatia. The annual budget of Rivers State alone – at more than \$1.3 billion – is larger than the national budgets of many African countries.

But even though this region accounts for nearly all of Nigeria's output of crude oil – officially estimated at 2.6 million barrels a day, but perhaps much higher – the Niger Delta region remains poor. Roads are potholed and often unpaved, schools and hospitals are few and understaffed, and most rural residents have no access to electricity or clean drinking water.

Emmanuel Okah, spokesman for outgoing Gov. Peter Odili of Rivers State, says that the blame for this neglect falls on the shoulders of the military governments that ruled Nigeria for decades until 1999. "Corruption had crept into the body fabric of the nation," he says. "The natural consequence of that is that the interests of the people suffered."

He then ticks off accomplishments of the civilian government since 1999: free medical care for children and the elderly; construction of three general hospitals; construction of three new power plants, at state expense; and a 34 kilometer "Unity Road" through the swamps to reach Ogoni, Andoni, and Okobo, areas that had been unreachable except by boat.

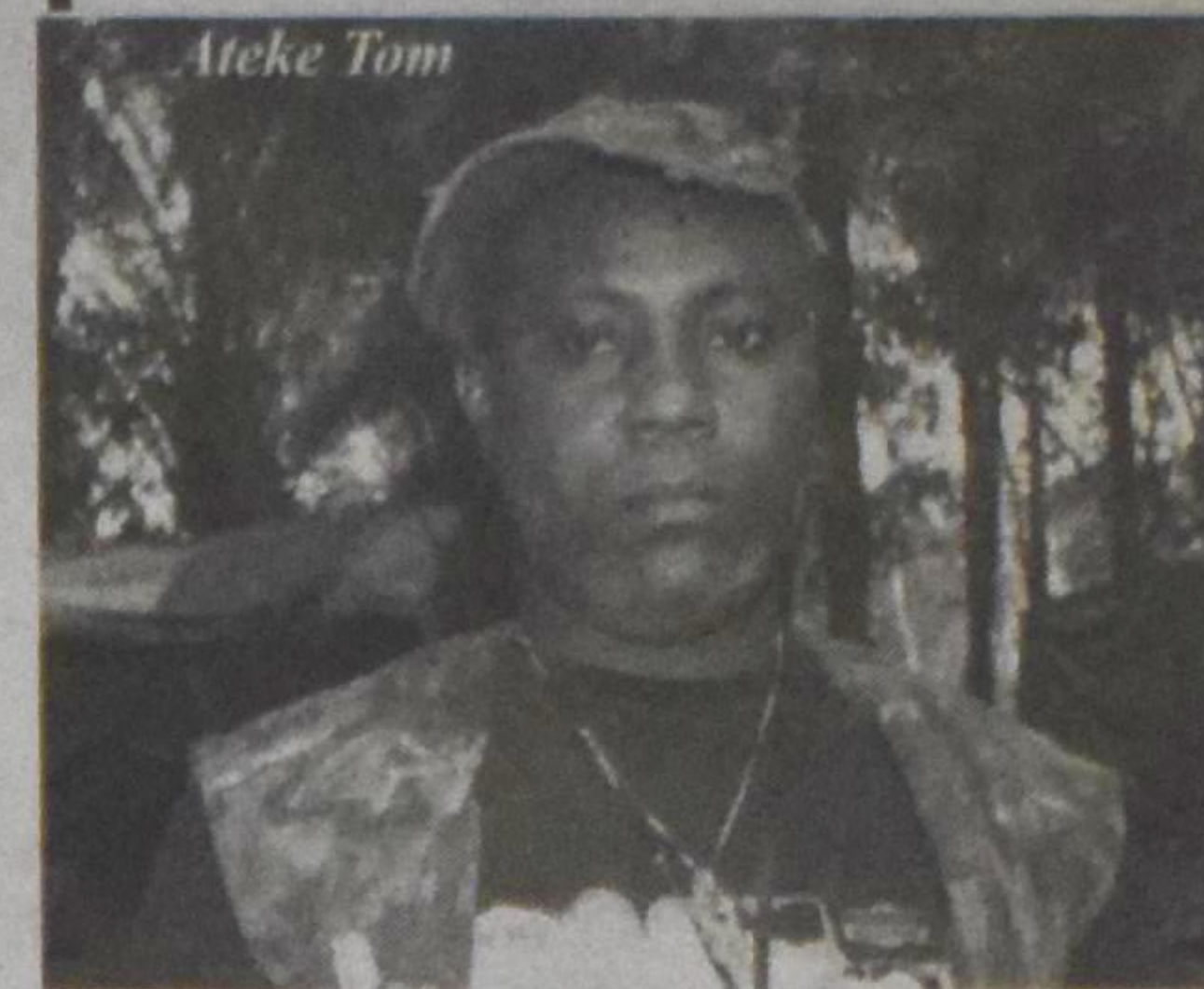
Militant groups say that they no longer trust in government promises or even in completed projects. "We are not interested in schools and clinics and the like," writes Jomo Gbomo in an e-mail. Mr. Gbomo claims to speak for the militant group MEND and has helped journalists arrange visits with MEND in the past. "We are demanding control over our resources."

This skepticism is shared by residents. At the village of Okujagu Ama, just a short boat ride from Port Harcourt, the impact of state spending is minimal at best. A water tower, built two months ago by the Nigerian government, has received none of the clean water that was promised. This forces residents to rely on the brackish water from their own bore-wells.

Two new schools have been built, with European Union funding, but no new teachers have been provided to teach in them. A healthcare clinic has been built, but there are no doctors or medicines. The only electricity comes from private generators. At night, most residents live in darkness.

Princewill Bipialaka, a traditional elder for the community, sits in the living room under a photo of himself in his uniform of a Nigerian immigration service officer. He worked for the government for 30 years, but never received a pension.

"We are stranded here," he says. "There are no factories where our boys can go work. We used to fish, but our fish are being poisoned by the pollution coming from these refineries." He sighs. "If you box me, what am I going to do? I must fight. That is what is happening. It's not a thing we want to do,



it's because of frustration."

Victor Fingesi, a former chairman of the central government's Petroleum Task Force, says that the Niger Delta remains poor for one reason alone: corruption.

Fingesi estimates that more than a third of Nigeria's total oil production is sold illegally. According to Fingesi, Nigeria's production is much higher than the official figures, around 3.8 million barrels a day (not 2.6 million). As a member of the OPEC cartel, Nigeria is only allowed to export 2.2 million barrels a day, leaving 1.6 million barrels for its own internal consumption.

"The problem is that our refineries are not working to capacity, so we can only turn 300,000 barrels per day into diesel or petrol for domestic consumption," says Fingesi, who quit his government job in 2003 because of death threats. "So then Nigeria has this excess crude that it cannot sell, and the only way to sell it is illegally. 1.6 million barrels a day, at \$65 per barrel, you're talking \$100 million a day, and none of it goes into government coffers."

Getting the excess oil out is a risky – and illegal – business, one that has been taken up by armed local gangs and militant groups. These groups break into oil pipelines and siphon off hundreds of barrels of oil at a time into nearby tanker trucks or small fishing vessels. This "bunkered" oil is then taken out into the high seas and sold to waiting oil tankers, bound for Asia, Europe, Russia, and even the US. Sometimes, instead of paying in cash, shipping captains pay the militants with arms and ammunition. One oil company executive, speaking on condition of privacy, says that the only solution is for the government to rein in corruption.

"One of the key problems in Nigeria is rotten corruption," says this executive. "This country produces oil. It could be a rich country. So when you see corruption on one hand and poverty on the other hand, and then this instability as well, it's a big problem."

In his swampland hideaway, just a half-hour speedboat ride from the outskirts of Port Harcourt, Tom says that he promised Governor Odili not to disrupt this election. "I promised not to do anything this time, since they promised to settle with us," he says. "But if [the government] does not do anything [to help the Delta's people] after the election, I will start to attack them again."

Scott Baldauf is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

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Incidentally, although the ruling AKP party has a strong majority in parliament, it won only 34 percent of the vote in 2002, the date of the last parliamentary elections, and those numbers were fuelled largely by a backlash against corruption scandals in the ruling coalition. Despite its assurances that it has no plans to dismantle the secular state, many commentators do distrust that rhetoric. They suspect that the AKP is dedicated to transforming the Turkish republic into a Sunni Muslim state with officially Islamic schools and closer ties with Iran and Syria. This suspicion is based on Erdogan's political history, which began with an avowedly Islamist party that was banned in 1980 for promoting an Islamist agenda.

Only time will tell whether Erdogan and the AKP are merely playing a waiting game or whether they are genuinely committed to a moderate and democratic Islamic order tolerant of non-Islamic lifestyles. The presidential elections and the parliamentary elections to come will decide which way Turkey goes in this watershed moment. In many ways, the future of Europe is also in the balance.



Statue of Kemal Ataturk

News

Orphan reunion leads to family reunion

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On April 14-16, 2006, Thanh Campbell's dream of hosting a reunion of the 57 Orphans – a group of Vietnamese children airlifted out of Saigon before it fell to the Communists – became a reality at Oakville Conference Centre. (See story in May 15, 2006 *Christian Courier*.) At the time, Thanh had no idea that media coverage of the event would lead to a more remarkable reunion.

Thirty-one-years ago, when Thanh was only one-year-old, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese children were orphaned – abandoned in burned out villages, on church steps, in hotel lobbies, and at orphanages. Thanh ended up being cared for at the Go Vap Orphanage.

Humanitarian flights to evacuate orphans were organized by several American non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the Ontario government, which had been contacted by an NGO, Friends of the Children of Vietnam. The Ontario government commissioned Victoria Leach, responsible for adoptions for the Children's Aid Society, and Helen Allen to assemble a team of people to go to Vietnam and assist in the evacuation.

In the spring of 1975, fifty-seven children were evacuated from Saigon on a Hercules cargo plane. Babies and infants, including Thanh, were placed two in a box. Duct-taped to the floor, the boxes were held securely in place. The older children sat in the canvass seats normally used by paratroopers.

Upon arrival in Toronto, the children were brought to Surrey Place Centre, a psychiatric children's facility behind Queen's Park, in which two floors had been temporarily converted into a care facility for the orphans. For the following three months, until the orphans were well enough to be released to their adopted families, staff and volunteers provided twenty-four care.

Several days after arriving in Toronto, Thanh was adopted by a Cambridge, Ontario couple, Rev. William and Maureen Campbell.

While growing up, Thanh was aware of the hair-raising details of his escape to safety because his sister Joan had written a letter to Victoria Leach requesting a description of the flight. Although interested in his native country and culture, Thanh gave little thought to meeting some of his fellow escapees because he assumed it was impossible to locate them. Also, he never imagined that he might eventually be reunited with his biological family, though he sometimes daydreamed (as most orphans do) about whom they were and what they were like.

Four years ago Thanh, a graduate of Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, met Trent Kilner, a Sarnia



Thanh (center) with family

resident, who had been on the same flight to freedom as he had. They decided to search for other orphans who had come to Canada at the same time. As a result of wide-ranging news coverage of their story, the men were contacted by forty-one of the fifty-seven orphans. The reunion took place soon afterwards.

When a journalist in Saigon read the online *Hamilton Spectator* coverage of the reunion, she published her own version of it in a Vietnamese newspaper, *Tuoi Tre*. Amazingly, Thanh's birth father, Mr. Nguyen Minh Thanh, read the story. He wondered if Thanh was his long lost son, whom he and his wife, now deceased, had never given up hope of finding.

Minh Thanh sent his son Thao to the *Tuoi Tre* office, asked for help in contacting Thanh, and sent him an e-mail early last summer stating that he thought he was his son.

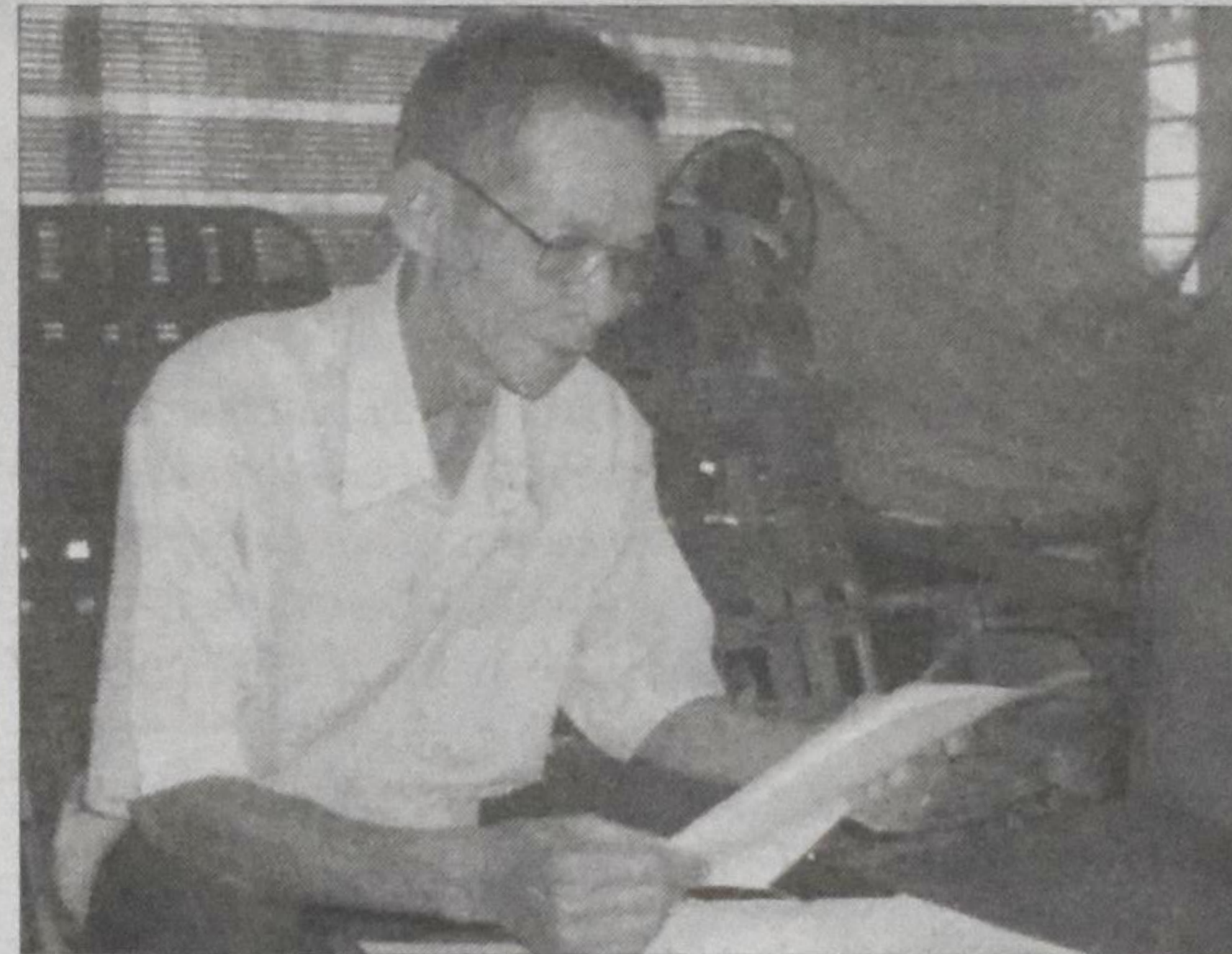
"I was dumbfounded and very skeptical that it was my real family," Thanh Campbell says of his initial reaction to the e-mail.

In order to prove the legitimacy of Minh Thanh's biological connection to the man he thought was his son, the younger Thanh, with the help of his friend, Khanh Ho, initiated DNA testing. On January 9, 2006, lab results affirmed that the elder Thanh's hunch was correct and that he had found his son.

About his first conversation with his father, Thanh says, "It was surreal and very interesting to hear him talk. He was so grateful to my adopted family for raising me so well and was very proud of whom I have become. He longs to see me, but does not want to pressure me into anything. It was exciting to talk to him, yet it is hard to feel a connection to someone you don't know. He was feeling really blessed

Estonia – have sought to purge their countries of those who worked for the KGB when they were under Soviet rule. Even in the 80s the KGB was still at work, and over the long history of the Soviet occupation its agents sent tens of thousands to prison camps and to their deaths.

But the Baltic states are now part of the European Union. And their efforts to punish ex-KGB have clashed with "EU values". The EU has condemned the measures taken to punish former collaborators as discriminatory. In 2004 and 2005 the European Court of Human Rights declared the anti-KGB acts to be in violation of the right to work (because agents were condemned to menial jobs) and it awarded damages to several former KGB agents hurt by the legislation.



Thanh's father

by God that he could be reunited with me, and he wished his wife, my biological mother, was there to witness it."

As Thanh spoke to his father through an interpreter (Khanh Ho), he learned why he had been separated from his birth family. For safety reasons Minh Thanh and his wife couldn't adequately care for their three sons so they were placed in an orphanage managed by Minh Thanh's aunt. "One day, soldiers came to move some of the kids to another orphanage," the younger Thanh relates. "I was one of them. They left my brothers there thinking that their little brother would soon be returned to them. After a short stay at that orphanage, I was then transferred to the Go Vap Orphanage, where we were eventually evacuated to Canada by Helen Allen and Victoria Leach."

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Estonia continued from p. 1

Germans in their attempt to stop the Russian advance. When the country once again came under Soviet control, tens of thousands more were sent off to Siberia or were executed. Leadership positions in the Estonian Soviet Republic tended to go to Russian immigrants, and the country was subject to a long process of russification.

After independence in 1991 Estonia enacted strict language laws to reverse this process, making Estonian once again the official language. But a large proportion of the Russian minority cannot speak Estonian. As a result, they are put at a severe disadvantage in terms of employment. Some stubbornly refuse to assimilate to the new order. The vast majority of them were born in the country and feel their relegation to second-class status very keenly. The rioters in Tallinn were mostly the disgruntled youth of the Russian minority.

In recent years the Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia and

Guest editorial

What we sing in church

Frank DeVries

Some years back in this paper I made comment on the kinds of songs we typically sang in our churches at that time – by “our churches” meaning the churches of nearly every denomination of my acquaintance. In that critique I mostly expressed my concern about the incessant, benumbing repeating of songs by, for example, singing once again the last stanza, then the chorus, then the chorus once again, and for good measure finishing off with the last line of the chorus repeated once more. Clearly “more” isn’t always better (see Matthew 6:7), yet the odd practice continues to this day, and loudly, always very loudly. One must assume church musicians think God is hard of hearing. However, today I focus on some other aspects of the songs we use in our services.

Once again, and most importantly, I am compelled to bemoan the lack of use of our traditional Psalms and Hymns. It is not that I am criticizing the ubiquitous “Praise Songs.” Many of them are fine songs, inspirational even, and, one might say, to a large degree they have become today’s hymns. Although this may be true, of course, it is equally true that in many churches, including the Christian Reformed Church of which I am a member, there exists a large musical tradition that lies largely untapped. One cannot be sure about the reason for this neglect, although perhaps the following may apply.

I am afraid that in many cases we are no longer the kind of community of God’s people we used to be in “the olden days.” We mostly go our own individual way, and save for some close friends in our congregation we know little of each other, share little with each other, and simply function in a non-combative ecclesiastical peaceful co-existence, and so in many instances instead of “God’s people” we have become a group of “individual Christians.” This is evidenced by the kinds of Praise Songs we sing (and there are many of those, songs that replace each other as rapidly as the love songs on the music charts. There is little time to learn them, and unlike the Psalms and

hymns of yore, few abide).

To become aware of this individualism, next time in church carefully read once the lyrics of the songs flashed on the screen. Notice how often the lyrics are replete with the pronouns “I,” and “me.” Then, in your heart of hearts, substitute these pronouns with “we,” and “our,” and notice the incredible difference that makes in the sense of the song. Individualism is a dangerous trend in our churches. Unless we start paying some attention to it next thing you know we’ll be praying, “Give me this day my daily bread.”

As child and teenager back in Holland I attended the Gereformeerde Kerk in Alphen aan den Rijn, a (then) small town in the province of Zuid Holland. There, I grew up with the versified Psalms and “Eenige Gezangen,” (some hymns). I don’t recall many sermons, but remember and daily play many, many of those. Although both my wife Celia and I often play and sing them at home, as part of the larger body of Christ we dearly wish we could sing them more often in church, too. But, as one CRC pastor told me once, “That’s the way it is, and it isn’t likely going to change.” Well, that may be.

You may have noticed that those in charge of the music in church, the song leaders and members of the music committee, are mostly young people and young adults. That is good, of course, but why “mostly?” There are many older people in church who would gladly volunteer to serve at a music committee and so help develop a *balanced* musical diet for the congregation, one, when implemented, would speak not only to the younger generation, but also, and perhaps especially, to the older one.

The question must be asked why it is that our young adults seem to be so enthralled with only contemporary Christian music. Many of these songs are fine hymns: I think of “How deep the Father’s love for us,” and “There is a Redeemer,” but who has ever taught our growing youth the beauty of the rhymed Psalms and Hymns from the CRC hymnals? By virtue of their calling, pastors are pastors and not musical specialists or aficionados like the members of music committees, although there of course remains much opportunity for pastors to give leadership with reference to the lyrics of the songs that are sung.

As mentioned, most music committees are made up of young adults. In general they do a fabulous job giving musical leadership. They are a caring, musically gifted people, who spend much of their free time to practise for the services, and we should be deeply grateful for them; they freely serve the Lord with their music ministry. Because of this dedication I firmly believe that when asked to do so they would not wait a minute to step up to the plate and invite interested older members of the congregation to help out in the music committee to the benefit of all.

In conclusion: I know for a fact that with this writing I reflect the thinking of many of the elderly in our congregations, older people who feel “left out” music-wise. If you don’t believe that, ask them! They will not volunteer that information, because they are

truly glad and thankful that young people show an interest in the continued life of the church and do not wish to rock that boat. But ask them!

The Psalms are the inspired, inscripturated word of God, and also through the musical versions of the Psalms God is directly speaking to us. Should we once again make regular use of them in our services either by using the CRC hymnal or flashed on screen (that is officially allowed, isn’t it?), not only would this be a source of great thankfulness for many of the elderly, but also would bring about a far greater sense of togetherness and a deeper awareness of our shared confession. Reviving the use of the Psalms in our services may even help reverse the current slide in membership, and perhaps, maybe, again begin again to draw others to our church services. For “The voice of the Lord is powerful,” (Psalm 29:4a).

An excellent resource for worship committees, leaders and all those involved in worship is John D. Witvliet’s *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship: A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources*. The Psalms are available for singing – and reading – in a wealth of forms and with a huge variety of melodies, from the Genevan tunes to contemporary praise-and-worship melodies. Witvliet provides an excellent introduction to such resources and helps us to assess them as well.

His book is not just about the various ways the Psalms have been put to music and how they may be used in worship. His purpose is also to deepen our understanding of the Psalms themselves by sharing the fruit of recent biblical scholarship, by leading us to reflect on the broader context of worship – its history, theology and practice – and by extending our knowledge of the history of church music as well.

Witvliet suggests a number of other ways that the Psalms can be used in worship, including dramatic readings, responsive readings and choral readings. And such use is rooted in a deeper grasp of the structure and theology of the Psalms themselves.

The book is, thus, also a rich resource for pastors and educators too, for it gives a more full-orbed, situated understanding of the Psalms and their place in worship.

As Witvliet says in his opening chapter, the Psalms provide for us “a basic grammar” for how we approach God. The book of Psalms is “the foundational and paradigmatic prayer book of the Christian church,” and we neglect it at our peril.

An excerpt to entice you (from page 32):

“Liturgical prayer is an act of vital imagination. ‘The church speaks in large, metaphorical phrasings that are evocative, generative, suggestive, and ultimately constitutive, but resist every closed meaning,’ says Brueggemann. ‘Praise is opposed to memo, even as sacrament opposes technique. Memos reduce, minimize, routinize, and seek to control; this sung poetry leaves things open in respect, awe, and astonishment.’ Praying the Psalms requires vivid, playful imagination, which makes praying the Psalms liturgically in North America a stubborn counter-cultural act.”

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Canada

Letters

Will CRC Synod make history – again?

The Christian Reformed Church's annual, denomination wide gathering of classical (regional) office bearers, will be meeting as Synod 2007 in Grand Rapids on June 9. This Synod is increasingly expected to make denominational history.

These (male) delegates to Synod will not only participate in the 150th Anniversary Celebration Service on June 10. More importantly they will be required to address major agenda items, including numerous overtures (requests pro and con) to Synod 2007 to adopt a proposed, major change to the CRC Church Order. It would rightly remove the discriminatory gender requirement for office bearers as decided at the 2006 Synod.

Hopefully, Synod 2007 will overwhelmingly reject the contradictory proposal that, if adopted, would continue to prohibit women from serving as delegates to Synod or as synodical deputies and that there be an arbitrary seven-year moratorium on discussion of this fundamental equality issue.

In my view, Synod 2007 should resolutely affirm the historic teaching of biblical equality that calls Christian women to serve freely in all ecclesiastical offices in the CRC according to Jesus' words of wisdom.

Synod 2007 also has the unique crossroads opportunity and duty to formulate a liberating, positive message and issue a serious, urgent, prophetic-pastoral statement for serious consideration by the President and the Congress of the United States, the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Canada, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the media and the public.

Synod's visionary communication should address the worsening crises and the unconscionable wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the tragedies in Africa, particularly the human disasters in Darfur, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe.

Thankfully, the 2006 synodical study report "War and Peace" helps to provide all interested with vital information and relevant recommendations regarding the current, deeply religious, moral,

political life-and-death questions.

As a Jesus-confessing, hope-filled people (citizens) and peace-justice-mercy-proclaiming churches we are conscience- and confession-bound to share widely and voice publicly our heart-felt faith conviction by way of a fresh, truly inclusive witness in wise words and credible deeds.

They would serve the coming of God's life-embracing reconciliation, restoration, and liberating reign of love.

Indeed, as the CRC's Contemporary Testimony Our World Belongs to God pointedly declares,

"Following the Prince of Peace,
we are called to be peacemakers,
and to promote harmony and order.
We call on our governments to work for peace,
we deplore the arms race
and the horrors that we risk.
We call on all nations to limit their weapons
To those needed in the defence of justice and freedom.
We pledge to walk in ways of peace,
confessing that our world belongs to God;
he is our sure defence."

"Our hope for a new earth is not tied
to what humans can do,
for we believe that one day
every challenge to God's rule
and every resistance to his will shall be crushed.
Then his kingdom shall come fully,
And our Lord shall rule forever."

Remember, those who remain silent agree with the deadly/
deathly status quo!

Yours, in Christ Jesus, the Life and Hope of the world.
Gerald Vandezande, C.M.

Shoulders Spanning Centuries

*When you, my child,
whose body grew in mine,
are threatened by pain and disease,
I would wipe it all away
if I could.*

*When you, my child,
who put your trusting hand in mine,
suffer nights of anguish
for a future yet unveiled,
I would shoulder your fear
if I could.*

*If I could,
I would.*

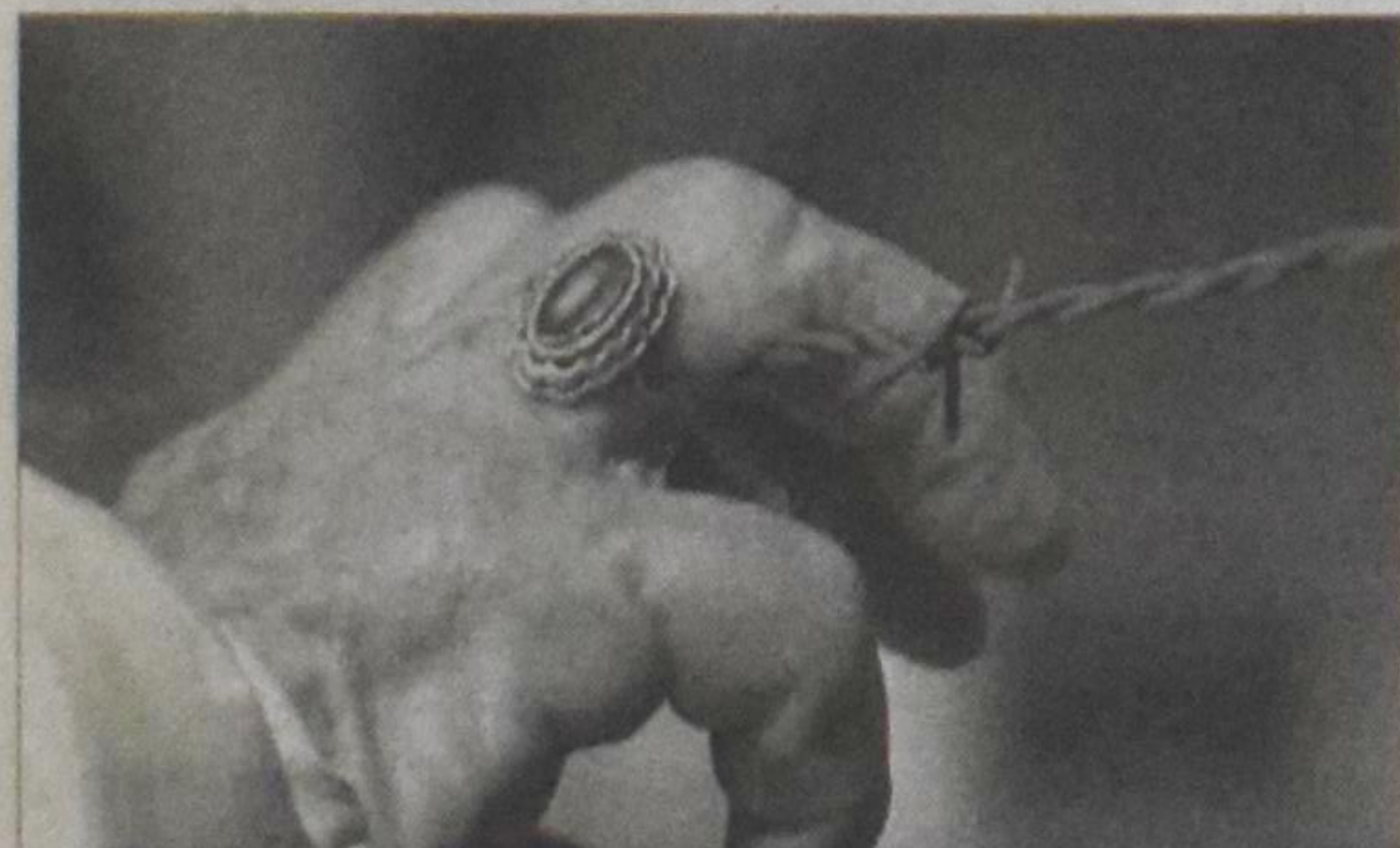
*But shoulders spanning centuries,
large enough to carry
every weeping parent,
every suffering child who ever lived,
will lift the burden
of our fearful knowledge.*

*Because He could,
He did.*

He does.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

The Dutch Resistance and the Holocaust: Redeemer University Sponsors Canadian Premiere of WWII Documentary



and analyzed, not only in our classrooms, but in the broader context of the community. This film honors the Dutch resistance to a brutal Nazi occupation, tells the story of Jewish resilience in the face of a systematic state policy of annihilation and relates a story of religious faith. We count it as a privilege to sponsor the first Canadian screening."

Hugh Cook, Redeemer emeritus professor of English and author of

the novel *The Homecoming Man*, agreed with the relevancy of the film's message. "It's a story of ordinary people performing extraordinary acts of heroism and faith. They helped to preserve freedom, sometimes at great personal cost. *The Reckoning* brings to life a chapter in history that needs to be remembered by all."

Helping bring the story to Canada will be Diet Eman and John Knight, two of the individuals featured in the film, as well as Storytelling Pictures president Corey Niemchick and John Evans, Creative Director. *The Reckoning* features Diet Eman's story in an especially heart-wrenching presentation that will not be soon forgotten.

Redeemer University College is sponsoring the Canadian premiere of *The Reckoning: Remembering the Dutch Resistance*. Already shown in various U.S. venues, the film, created by the Michigan film company Storytelling Pictures, will premiere for its Canadian audience on May 29 in the Redeemer auditorium.

The Reckoning recounts the experiences of six individuals whose lives were profoundly changed by the events in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation. Justin Cooper explained Redeemer's reason for involvement: "Part of our mission as an undergraduate university is to insure that important stories and events are discussed

The Reckoning: Remembering the Dutch Resistance

Tuesday, May 29 at 7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7:00 p.m.)

Redeemer Auditorium

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Letters/Opinion

Seeking harmony in China

James Skillen

Most religious practices are tightly controlled in China. Like many cultural and educational organizations, churches must meet strict registration guidelines. Many groups that cannot accept the strictures operate secretly, underground, for as long as they can.

Yet what about China as a whole – as a modern nation and state? Shall we identify it simply as a secular communist system? No, that would not be quite accurate. Look with me for a moment at the moves now being made by China's leaders to revive admiration for, if not veneration of, Confucius (see

Richard McGregor's "The Pursuit of Harmony," *Financial Times*, 4/12/07).

The religious zeal that characterized the communist regime of Mao Zedong (from 1949 to 1976) led him to attack Confucius as an outdated drag on the transformation of China. Mao destroyed the temple that honored Confucius in the ancient philosopher's hometown of Qufu. As a comprehensive wisdom for life, Confucianism was a major roadblock to Mao's plan to radically transform China into a communist society. It may be surprising, then, to realize that Mao's attempt to build a new kind of society based on his own wisdom – published as a

devotional guide in his little *Red Book* – led him to assume a position similar to that of earlier Confucian emperors. Mao adopted a role like that of the ancient Son of Heaven (the emperor) who was empowered by the Mandate of Heaven to establish a harmonious Confucian social order.

Among the problems that China faces today, decades after Mao, is a weakening moral fabric. The current way of life that China's leaders have authorized is dedicated to ever-increasing economic growth, which also justifies personal quests for wealth. Just as consumerism, individualism, and the all out push for economic growth in the West

can undermine moral obligations and social solidarity, so in China we can see a similar tendency picking up speed. The present government in China senses that its moral authority is weaker than Mao's and much weaker than that once enjoyed by the emperors who nurtured strong Confucian moral bonds with the people.

This may be the reason why the Communist Party today is quietly and even publicly beginning to reinstate Confucius. To be able to keep pushing an agenda for China's growth, the political leaders need to regain something like the mantle of "benevolent and enlightened" authority that united the people with their leaders in early eras. The leadership needs the people to trust it and to agree that the government's strong control over society and the economy is best for achieving a harmonious society.

Confucius



What does any of this have to do with religion, you might ask? The quest for national harmony in China today requires that any set of beliefs or pattern of wisdom that any group holds must conform to, or remain subordinated to, the way of life prescribed by the government and Communist Party. The government alone bears the Mandate of Heaven (even if "heaven" is not mentioned and has only metaphorical status). The party's path to social harmony is the only legitimate path for China as a whole to take.

What I've just described is a government-led religious way of life, and this is where Confucius reenters. As Richard McGregor writes, Confucius can serve the leaders as "an important antidote to organized religion, which is growing rapidly in China, especially Christianity in various forms. At a time when

Continued on page 16

Beach-combing with the Third Wave

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



A father took his young daughter to visit a farm. When they passed the horses, the daughter exclaimed, "They're going to church!" When her father asked what she meant, she replied innocently: "They all have a long face!"

Some churches, especially if you think back thirty years or so, were pretty somber places. There was passion, no doubt, but it was often expressed intellectually. Right doctrine was talked about more than right emotions. Yet Robert C. Roberts maintains: "Whatever else Christianity may be, it is a set of emotions. It is love of God and neighbor, grief about one's own waywardness, joy in the merciful salvation of our God, gratitude, hope, and peace." In other words, discipleship is the cultivation of habits in the heart – not just ideas in the head.

One thing that draws me to God in the person of Christ is his joy. I consider myself to be a person of laughter, and so when I heard about "the laughing church," I had to investigate.

I went. I saw. I caught those conquered by the Spirit and laid them gently on the floor, but the floor I did not personally visit. I saw some weird stuff, some of it probably helpful for people, some of it much less spectacular than it was named to be. I went home and pondered these things in my heart. I was skeptical of many things, but open to at least this: a broader range of emotions demonstrated in worship.

This is similar to the approach of the majority report from the CRC Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism: open and cautious. It is cautious about the wacky, sensationalistic and dualistic parts of the movement, but open to such things as the Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International (Dunamis), the Alpha material, gift-based ministry, and prayers that echo practices we find in the Biblical narrative. It explains that at a time when some denominations seem to operate with a "functional deism" (God is far, far away) this Spirit-led movement brings revival.

Paved paradise

Was there ever a time when these practices and concerns did not exist somewhere in God's church? I'm not convinced, but some people claim these "waves" are unique. N.T. Wright does not go through the historical record, but in his recent invitation to faith entitled *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (Harper, 2006), he tells a parable that may shed some light on the issue.

He says once upon a time there was a country where many springs flourished. The king noticed some of these springs were erratic and even sometimes dangerous. So he paved them all over with cement and set up a system of pipes to bring water efficiently to everyone. The water quality languished over time, but people

got used to it as the years went by.

Then, one day, the pressure built up beneath the concrete, and small cracks began to form. Eventually, the springs below could not be contained anymore and the ground exploded with fountains of water. The water gushed right through the pavement and the eruptions turned the roads and cities into chaos. The spray was often muddy, but the people cheered as they no longer had to rely on the system anymore.

Those who ran the system were at a loss, for they no longer were in control. In fact, it seemed like everything was out of control. A debate ensued in the country: was this danger or opportunity?

Charismatic Reformed

We find ourselves in similar times. While I wish to nurture the *fruits* of the Spirit more intentionally than I am captivated by the *gifts* of the Spirit, and while I am shy of exorcisms, spiritual mapping, tongues-speaking and faith healers, there is something that attracts me in this church-culture shift. It illuminates and liberates some part of us that was previously suppressed.

While the language of some charismatics may be spiritually dualistic, their worship is not. In the book *Word and Spirit at Play: Towards a Charismatic Theology* Reformed pastor Jean-Jacques Suurmond explains how much of Pentecostalism nurtures a spirituality that has "remained free of the one-sided 'Greek' split between the understanding on one hand and the feelings and the body on the other. The West is discovering how much damage this division has caused to the welfare of human beings and the environment... Pentecostalism is essentially a gift from the Third World to the West with its poverty of feelings and its fear of the body. Its spirituality is expressed most clearly in celebration." If this movement can be seen as a corrective to previous faults, I'm open.

That said, I am certainly not interested in the opposite extreme – an anti-intellectual triumphalism. Jamie Smith is a Calvin College professor named by Albert Wolters as "one of the most impressive young academics in the reformational movement today." Interesting enough, Smith calls himself a tongues-speaking charismatic Reformed and catholic Christian, and much of his writing is geared towards liberating Christians from the "thinking thing" model of humanness bequeathed us by modernity. I see his books as a commentary on the hymn title, "Lord Jesus I Long to be Perfectly Whole."

Big waves bring lots of surprising things to shore. Some of it is odd or exotic, and some of it might be the nourishing water we desperately need.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.



Stewardship

Engineering students design affordable vehicle for Third World



A basic utility vehicle (BUV) built by a Calvin senior design team from salvaged automobile parts placed second in the 2007 BUV Design Competition sponsored by the Institute for Affordable Transportation.

The Calvin BUV was built by four mechanical engineering students: Steve Buys from Denver, Colorado; Rob Lindquist from Dayton, Ohio; Scott Saxsma from Highland, Indiana; and Matt Korthuis from Lynden, Washington.

And in the first trip by a Calvin team to the competition, the quartet finished second overall, edged by a mere 1.1 points for first place by a team from Northern Illinois University.

The BUV was not only designed for the contest; the four students also submitted it as their senior design project, the culmination of their Calvin engineering education.

The quartet chose their project after learning about the contest from the Institute for Affordable Transportation (IAT) Web site. The IAT is a not-for-profit public charity devoted to developing high-quality, low-cost transportation for the working poor in the developing world. This was the seventh year the institute has held the contest to inspire new design ideas for the multipurpose BUVs they produce for Africa and Latin America.

"Right away it jumped out at us as something we would enjoy working with because we're all automotive-gear type guys," says Korthuis.

The contest specified the vehicle must be built from parts salvaged from a Toyota Tercel or Corolla.

"They chose the Tercel because it's the most mass-produced vehicle in the world," says Saxsma.

"So, in theory," adds Korthuis, "there

would be more broken down ones to salvage parts from."

The completed vehicle would have to be capable of carrying 1100 lbs up a 20-percent grade and it had to be built to be broken in half for shipping purposes. Its total cost could be no more than \$1,000.

The team designed their vehicle from a 1988 Tercel they purchased for \$300 from Goshen, Indiana.

"I call it the Frankenstein vehicle," says Saxsma. "We built our own frame from scratch out of tube steel. We harvested the transmission, front suspension and many electrical components from the Tercel and then integrated those into the frame we had designed."

The resulting BUV—built for rural areas and sunny climates—has no doors or roof and can handle off-road challenges.

One thing that separated the Calvin design from its competitors was its simple design, the team maintains.

"It's really easy to design something that is really complicated and works well," says Buys. "It's very hard to design something that's simple and works well. That's the challenge of any engineering problem."

The student teams were required to put their BUVs through a whole battery of trials to win the competition: the judge's drive, the hill climb (with successively heavier amounts of sandbags), the 90-minute endurance test, the acceleration course, the mud pit cross, the mogul field and the swamp cross as well as oral and written presentations.

Their second place finish earned them a trophy, tickets to the Indy 500 and "sweet hats and plastic cups."

From a story written by Calvin staff writer Myrna Anderson

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Stagnant waters

There are times in the ebb and flow of our lives that we may find ourselves in stagnant waters. These are times when we feel out-of-it and an outcast from the excitement and challenge of living. We may feel worthless, wondering what contribution we are making in this life. "What does God have in mind for me?" we ask. We ponder, grope, agonize, and then lose the joy of living. Like water disconnected from the flow, we are motionless and we wait and wonder.

Stagnant waters can be dangerous. Sometimes we may go into deep depression—feeling worthless and despairing. "Where is God in what I am experiencing," we ask ourselves.

But stagnant waters can also be times of taking stock—a time to review the past and reflect on God's faithfulness in both the good times and the bad. It is a time to contemplate and pray for God's guidance for the next steps. Sometimes it takes a lot of time and effort to get back into the stream.

How do I as a Christian manage the times when I'm in stagnant waters, times when I feel like there is no light at the end of a dark valley. It seems to me that the first thing to do is not to despair but rather to hope in the Lord. Now, that is easier to say than to do, especially when you are in it; yet, the situation makes it even more important that I do hope in the Lord.

Another step is to do a self-evaluation. If you haven't done so in the last five years, take one of those personality tests that help you determine your gifts, aptitudes, and skills. I recently came across one called "Living by Design" which is hosted by Fellowship Church (Little Rock, Arkansas). I did not take it myself but, in my opinion, it looks very comprehensive and the test is properly reviewed by competent people (check out the website www.youruniquedesign.com, sorry Internet only—cost \$30). The benefit of taking personal tests like this one is to help you determine your best fit in the stream of life with your particular and unique set of skills, abilities, and aptitudes. You are worth it, as Scripture affirms:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139: 13-14

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

It is important for all of us to be reminded that we are God's. We live to steward all that God has entrusted to us. He had that stewardship in mind for us right from the moment he knit us together. When we are in stagnant waters, the question we should ask is: "What does God have in mind for me? Where does he want me to serve? Even when I'm very limited in ability, what can I do to once again be active in God's living-waters enterprise?"

Hope in the Lord, take stock of your God-given gifts, and spend time committed to prayer and Scripture study. With each opportunity that you find by searching or that may simply come your way, commit it to prayer and lay your hopes and anxieties before the Lord. Make time with God a priority as you consider the opportunities to re-engage the mainstream. Use the time away from the flow to grow closer to God. When life is busy, it is so easy to neglect our relationship with him. Be open to God's leading. Through prayer God can propel you from stagnant waters to living streams. Listen and follow his prompting—his leading.

Stewardly tip: Be a Prayer Warrior!

Prayer is so important. Through it we engage spiritual power to combat the tactics of Satan and his followers. Many missionaries have experienced a miraculous hedge of protection because people were praying for them. Take time from the busyness of the mainstream to find an eddy to counter the prevailing spiritual darkness around us.

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Steward Leadership

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Church

What happened in Turkey

R. Scott Clark

What follows is a narrative concerning the recent slaughter (and that is too gentle a

word for what happened) of Christian missionaries in Turkey. The narrative comes from a reliable source. Being a Christian in

Turkey is extraordinarily dangerous. Therefore I've omitted the name of the source.

A letter to the Churches in America from The Protestant Church of Smyrna

Dear friends,

This past week has been filled with much sorrow. We send our condolences for the slaying of all those university students in Virginia. May the Lord comfort the families and friends of the victims and all those impacted by the tragedy.

Many of you have heard by now of our devastating loss here.

On Wednesday morning, 46-year-old German missionary and father of three Tilman Geske kissed his wife goodbye as he left to go to the Turkish church office, which was also the location of the church's ministry Zirve Publishing. Zirve prints and distributes Christian literature to Malatya and nearby cities in Eastern Turkey. In another area of town, 35-year-old Pastor Necati Aydin, father of two, said goodbye to his wife leaving for the office as well. They had a morning Bible Study and prayer meeting that some other believers in town would also be attending. Ugur Yuksel also made his way to the Bible study.

None of these three men knew that what awaited them at the Bible study was the ultimate testing and application of their faith, which would conclude with their entrance into glory to receive their crown of righteousness from Christ and honor from all the saints awaiting them in the Lord's presence.

On the other side of town, ten young men all under 20 years old put into place final arrangements for their ultimate act of faith, living out their love for Allah and hatred of infidels who undermined their religion.

On Resurrection Sunday, five of these men had been to a by-invitation-only evangelistic service that Pastor Necati and his men had arranged at a hotel conference room in the city. The men were known to the believers as "seekers." No one knows what happened in the hearts of those men as they listened to the gospel. Were they touched by the Holy Spirit? Were they convicted of sin? Did they hear the gospel in their heart of hearts? Today we only have the beginning of their story.

These men, one of whom is the son of a mayor in the province of Malatya, are part of a tarikat, or a group of "faithful believers" in Islam. Tarikat membership is highly respected here; it's like a fraternity membership. In fact, it is said that no one can get into public office without membership in a tarikat. These men all lived in the same dorm, possibly owned by that tarikat.

The men got guns and knives ready for their final act of service to Allah. They arrived in time for the Bible Study, around 11.

They arrived, tied Ugur, Necati, and Tilman's hands and feet to chairs and as they videoed their work on their cellphones, they tortured our brothers for two hours....

[Details of the torture are omitted. They are unbelievably gruesome. -RSC]

Neighbors in workplaces near the print-

house said later they had heard yelling, but assumed the owners were having a domestic argument so they did not respond.

Meanwhile, another believer Gokhan and his wife had a leisurely morning, he slept in till 10, ate a long breakfast and finally around 1 he and his wife arrived at the office. The door was locked from the inside, and his key would not work. He phoned and though it had connection on his end he did not hear the phone ringing inside. He called cell phones of his brothers and finally Ugur answered his phone. "We are not at the office. Go to the hotel meeting. We are there. We will come there," he said cryptically. Meanwhile in the background Gokhan heard weeping and a strange snarling sound.

He phoned the police, and the nearest officer arrived in about five minutes. He pounded on the door, "Police, open up!" Initially he thought it was a domestic disturbance. At that point they heard another snarl and a gurgling moan. The police understood that sound as human suffering, prepared the clip in his gun and burst through the door, to find a grisly scene.

Tilman and Necati had been slaughtered.... Necati and Ugur's throats were slit in the previous minutes before the door was kicked in. Ugur was barely alive.

Four assailants dropped their weapons.

Meanwhile Gokhan heard a sound of yelling in the street. Someone had jumped out of the third story window from the office. Running down, he found a man he recognized named Emre. He had massive head trauma and strangely, was snarling. It turns out that he was the main leader of the attacks.

What follows is almost as disturbing as the act itself. Amidst public outcry against the event, public officials from the Prime Minister to the local government and mayors of Malatya, Ankara, Izmir, media and Muslim leaders alike, judges, prosecutors – all the leaders blame the Christians for the act. Interviews with these leaders are filled with the same idea, "We hope you've learned your lesson. You shouldn't be doing these things." Even the Public Prosecutor of Malatya, who will prosecute these murderers shares the view that these "young men" are not to blame for their savagery. The Malatya Governor smirked as he spoke of the attacks.

The church of Christ in Turkey responded in a way that honored God, hundreds of believers and dozens of pastors flew in as fast as they could to stand by the small church of Malatya and encourage the believers, take care of legal issues, and represent Christians to the media.

When Suzanna Tilman expressed her wish to bury her husband in Malatya, the Governor tried to stop it, and when he realized he could not stop it, he told all people that "it is a sin to dig a grave for a Christian." In the end,

the believers who had come up from Adana grabbed shovels and dug a grave for him in an untended hundred-year-old Armenian graveyard.

Yesterday was Necati's funeral. It took place here in Izmir since he was initially from here. The darkness does not understand the light. Though the churches expressed their forgiveness for the event, Christians were not to be trusted. Before they would load the coffin onto the plane, it went through two separate xray exams to make sure it was not loaded with explosives.

Though it took a lot of late-into-the hour planning, the funeral was a beautiful event. Thousands of Turkish Christians and missionaries came to show their love for Christ, and their honor for this man chosen to die for Christ. Like a piece of heaven. It took place outside at Buca Baptist church. Two assistant Governors of Izmir were there solemnly watching the event from the front row. Dozens of news agencies were there documenting the events with live news and photographs. Who knows the impact the funeral had on those watching? This is the beginning of their story as well. Pray for them.

Please pray for the Church of Christ in Turkey. Don't pray against persecution, pray for perseverance. The church is better having lost our brothers, the fruit in our lives, the renewed faith, the burning desire to spread the gospel to quench more darkness in Malatya...all these are not to be regretted. Pray that we stand strong against external opposition and especially pray that we stand strong against internal struggles with sin, our true weakness.

This we know. Christ Jesus was there when our brothers were giving their lives for him. He was there, like he was when Stephen was being stoned in Saul of Tarsus's sight.

Someday the video of the deaths of our brothers may reveal more to us about the strength that we know Christ gave them to endure their last cross, about the peace the Spirit of God endowed them with to suffer for their beloved Savior. But we know he did not leave their side. We know their minds were full of Scripture strengthening them to endure, as darkness tried to subdue the unsubduable Light of the Gospel. We know they knew they would soon be with Christ.

We don't know the details. We don't know the kind of justice that will or will not be served on this earth.

But we pray – and urge you to pray – that someday one of those five boys will come to faith because of the testimony in death of Tilman Geske, who gave his life as a missionary to the beloved Turks and the testimony in death of Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel, the first martyrs for Christ out of the Turkish Church.

Church autonomy, patriotism supreme, says Chinese Protestant

Hisashi Yukimoto Nishinomiya

Japan (ENI) – Autonomy and patriotism remain supreme principles for China's government-approved Protestant church in responding to rapid changes in society and protecting Chinese civilization against foreign influences, a Protestant leader has said.

"The 'three-self' principle is an integration of loving Christ and the nation," said Ji Jianhong, chairperson of the national committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, who led a 10-strong delegation for a one-week visit to Japan from April 19.

His comment was made during a lecture given as part of a class on Christianity at Kwansei Gakuin University, a Methodist-run institution in the western part of Japan.

During the lecture, Ji emphasized that the "three-self" principles, which include self-governance, self-support and self-propagation, are "the life of the development of the churches that are linked with Chinese culture".

The Protestant churches in China are officially recognized by the government and are in 2007 marking the 200th anniversary of Protestant missionary work in the country. They have about 20 million believers and 50,000 churches, said Ji.

"There is no subordination in the [churches'] relationship with the State," Ji said, asserting that there is religious freedom under Chinese religious laws and regulations as long there is no disturbance of public order. The Roman Catholic Church and other churches that operate unofficial and underground groups known as "house churches," however, contend that religious freedom is seriously curtailed in China.

Asked by a student in the audience about the churches' freedom to allow foreigners to evangelize in China and translating foreign theology books into Chinese, Ji said they belonged to the "future tasks" of the churches in China. "It is possible [to do so] if they are requested by the Three-Self churches."

Asked why Christianity in China is growing rapidly, Ji told Ecumenical News International: "Because Christianity [in China] reflects the national interest, and Christians do good work in bearing witness."

On the question of what young people are seeking from Christianity in a rapidly growing economy which is widening the urban-rural gap in China, Ji said, "The number of young people in the churches is growing more than ever, because they are seeking something spiritual rather than their material satisfaction."

The Protestant churches in China are united and jointly run by his committee and the China Christian Council. They describe themselves as "post-denominational".

Church

Latinos altering US religious life, says study

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – Latinos are radically altering the religious landscape of the United States, in large part because of their strong affiliations with Pentecostal and charismatic movements, a new study has concluded.

The study, "Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion," by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Pew Hispanic Center notes that because of their increasing numbers in the United States, Latinos, or Hispanics, are likely to bring about "important changes" in the Roman Catholic Church, the single largest US religious denomination.

The study notes that more than half of US Latino Catholics identify themselves as charismatics, who follow a more lively form of worship than most other Catholics. This contrasts with the one-eighth of non-Hispanic Catholics who also identify themselves as charismatics.

"While remaining committed to the church and its traditional teachings, many of these Latino Catholics say they have witnessed or experienced occurrences typical of spirit-filled or renewalist movements, including divine healing and direct revelations from God," the study notes. "Even many Latino Catholics who do not identify themselves as renewalists

appear deeply influenced by spirit-filled forms of Christianity."

The study defines the renewal movement as placing "special emphasis on God's ongoing, day-to-day intervention in human affairs through the person of the Holy Spirit".

Such influences are also strongly felt among Latino Protestants in the United States, with more than half saying they identify with so-called "spirit-filled religion," a substantially higher number than non-Latino Protestants, the study found.

More than two-thirds of US Latinos, some 68 percent, identify themselves as Roman Catholics, while 15 percent identify themselves as born-again or Evangelical Protestants. However, whatever their affiliation, the study concluded that for "the great majority of Latinos, regardless of their religious tradition, God is an active force in everyday life." The study also found that Latinos who call themselves evangelical Protestants are twice as likely as Catholic Latinos to identify with the Republican Party, while US Latino Catholics remain loyal, as they have for some time, to the Democratic Party.

Link to the study: <http://pewforum.org/surveys/hispanic/>

Mass arrest of Chinese and American Christian leaders

Dan Wooding

MIDLAND, TX (ANS) – Aid Association (CAA) has told ANS that it has learned through "credible sources" that on April 19, 2007 in Akesu City, located in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, that about 30 major Chinese house church leaders were arrested when they met with four American Christians.

"Among the Americans are a senior pastor and an associate pastor of an American church," said a CAA spokesperson. "Sources tell us that the four Americans arrived at Akesu airport on April 17 and started fellowship with the house church leaders on April 18 at a local church family house." The spokesperson said the latest news is that the four Americans are still being held in an undisclosed hotel for questioning. The translator for the Americans, Mr. Jinhong Li

from Beijing, is also still being detained.

"On April 23, the Public Security Bureau (PSB) confiscated the luggage of the four Americans from the house of their host, a local church family," said the CAA spokesperson.

"Eight Chinese pastors were released on April 20 and at least six others have already received criminal detention papers for 30 days detention for being accused as 'suspects involved in evil cult activities.'"

The Chinese government may sentence the six accused pastors to one-three years re-education through labor because they were previously detained for one month for organizing house church activities a couple of years ago.

Eyewitnesses told CAA that at least two of the arrested were seen with bleeding noses and bruises.

Indian church head's 90th birthday gift is 1500 houses for poor

Anto Akkara

Bangalore, India (ENI) – A total of 1500 houses for the poor "irrespective of caste and creed" was pledged at the 90th birthday celebrations of the head of the Mar Thoma church based in southern Kerala state.

A giant wooden key symbolizing the houses to be built was handed to church head Metropolitan Philipose mar Chrysostom on April 27 at Thivualla, the headquarters of the church in the presence of church and political leaders.

The Indian federal state planning minister M V Rajasekharan described Metropolitan Chrysostom as "a prophet of our times."

Metropolitan Chrysostom



He said: "We need such inspiring leaders to uphold moral values in public life."

The general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Samuel Kobia, who visited India in February, had a message read on his behalf. He said: "Your much appreciated service to the Church and humanity spanning more than half a century as a bishop are unique and unparalleled in recent ecclesiastical and ecumenical history."

Born on April 27, 1917, mar Chrysostom was consecrated as bishop in 1953 and was chosen as the suffragan metropolitan in 1978. He assumed the office of the head of the Mar Thoma church in 1999.

Other political leaders in Kerala joined the church leaders in the celebration for Chrysostom who is the most senior church leader in the state, which has a strong Christian presence.



"We wanted this unique occasion to be remembered not by building monuments, but by serving the poor," Suffragan Metropolitan Zacharias mar Theophilus, coordinator of the program for building the 1500 houses, told Ecumenical News International.

The 1500 houses, each costing 80,000 Indian rupees (about US\$2000), are being made with money donated by church members as a "token of their love for the metropolitan". The first house was handed over on April 28 at Chengannoor, said mar Theophilus, and the work on 180 houses has been completed.

Catholic Church scraps limbo

A Vatican committee that has been reassessing the medieval teaching that the souls of unbaptized babies are condemned to eternity in limbo, a place that is neither heaven nor hell, concluded that unbaptized babies who die may go to heaven.

The decision sets aside centuries of Roman Catholic traditional belief. The idea of limbo has gradually fallen out of favor among Catholics, who see it as harsh and not befitting a merciful God.

Although the finding of Vatican's International Theological Commission commission is advisory, it has the endorsement of Pope Benedict, so it looks destined to become official teaching.

"Our conclusion," said the committee, is that there are "serious theological and liturgical grounds for hope that unbaptized infants who die will be saved and brought into eternal happiness." The committee added that although this is not "sure knowledge," it comes in the context of a loving and just God who "wants all human beings to be saved."

The decision to abolish limbo has long been expected. Benedict and the late Pope John Paul II both

have expressed misgivings about the doctrine. When he was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and responsible for church dogma, Benedict said he viewed limbo as a mere "theological hypothesis." The notion of limbo was already removed from the Catholic catechism 15 years ago.

In the 5th century, St. Augustine declared that all unbaptized babies went to hell upon death. By the Middle Ages, the idea was softened to suggest a less severe fate, limbo.

In his Divine Comedy, Dante characterized limbo as the first circle of hell and populated it with the great thinkers of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as leading Islamic philosophers.

Father Thomas Rausch, a theologian at Loyola Marymount University, said "most young Catholics are probably not even aware of limbo" because of its removal from the catechism. "So I don't see this document as terribly earthshaking. But it is an interesting example of the doctrinal development going on in a church that is alive and responding to new questions."

Dan Wooding is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times) and the ASSIST News Service (ANS).

Hebrews

God's Word is dynamic: the *Epistle to the Hebrews*



And the mountain shook, *Barry Moser*

William L. Vander Beek, Th.M.

The over-all theme of Hebrews

Hebrews is so rich in content that those who study it find quite a number of important themes in it. With such a variety of themes one would hope to find one theme which binds the whole Epistle together. There *is* such a theme. It is right in the opening sentence of Hebrews. One long sentence in Greek; in our Bibles, it consists of the first four verses of chapter 1. The theme is that God is the God *who speaks*. He spoke to the fathers before Christ, and now he speaks to us – in Christ.

How and where does he speak?

1. First of all, he speaks in the Scriptures, of course. Hebrews has more quotations from and allusions to Old Testament passages than any other book in the New Testament. And in all of them the emphasis is not on the human writer (he seldom gets even mentioned), but God himself speaks these old words. And his old words are always presented as words that speak about Christ. Moreover, they are words which he still speaks to us today. His words are always contemporary.

2. But God does not only speak in written Scriptures. He speaks just as much in history, in the affairs of his created world. Right in the opening sentence (1:2), we read: "The Son of God is sustaining all things" – how? – "by the *power* of his Word." His word is the *dynamic* which moves history to

its glorious end. God does not only speak; his word also works. The Hebrew word for "word" (*dabar*) includes the effect of what God says. It "achieves the purpose for which he sends it" (Isa. 55:10).

So that very first sentence of Hebrews reveals the golden thread, the basic theme which binds the whole book together. *God speaks* (Heb. 1:1-4). Seldom has that theme been fully recognized. German scholars did follow it through. Kittel's famous *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* did. And the late professor C. Veenhof devoted his inaugural lecture in Kampen to this theme way back in 1934.

Personal address and promise

Besides the main Old Testament quotations (Psalms 8, 40, 95, 110 and Jeremiah 31:31-34) the student of Hebrews discovers more and more data from the O.T. in Hebrews. The book is steeped in O.T. And as you study the references you find that the author has carefully selected them. He prefers texts which speak directly: they carry on a person-to-person conversation. God speaks to his Son. Notice the two "You are" texts in Heb. 5:5,6: "You are my Son" and "You are a priest forever." And in Heb. 10:7 the Son's personal reply is recorded: "Here I am."

He speaks to us in that personal way as well. Think of the call of Ps. 95, "Today, if you hear his voice..." (Heb. 3:7,15;4:7). Heb 3 and 4 does very interesting things just with that word "today". This shows

another preference: the author prefers texts which have a *time*-reference in it, such as, "The time is coming..." (Heb. 8:8, quoting Jer. 31:31-34). And the Haggai 2:6 reference in Heb. 12:26: "At that time..." are some examples.

An important example of the way in which God speaks is that he speaks *promises*. And since his promises never fail, they are divine *oaths* (See Heb. 6:6,18). In this Epistle God's words come with divine authority, especially in chapters 2:1-9.

Translation

Hebrews is a masterful piece of Greek literature. Excellent sentences, a refined choice of words, and arguments that are very structured, built up step by step toward a great climax. Such literature requires a fine sensitivity on the part of those who comment on it. Most commentators insist that the final phrase in Heb. 2:7-9 declaring that man and Jesus were "made a little lower than the angels" must be translated "for a little while" since verse nine is about Jesus. But the Greek words, as well as the original Hebrew, have a double meaning: in both languages they mean "lower in rank" as well as "shorter in time". To insist that in 2:9 it necessarily must mean something different from the meaning of the same words in verse

seven breaks up the whole argument of the passage: that not *man* but *Jesus* fulfills Ps. 8 and brings man to glory.

Melchizedek and salvation history

Hebrews is unique in a number of ways. For example, it is the only book in the New Testament which deals with Melchizedek as he appears in Gen. 14:18-20 and Ps. 110:4 ("in the order of Melchizedek"). Hebrews

points out that father Abraham himself recognized that Melchizedek was superior to him, for Abraham gave him "tithes" of the plunder he won from enemy kings and submitted to Melchizedek's blessing, not the other way around. The author makes that part of his argument that the Levitical cultus (the tabernacle services) were not adequate to bring salvation; they were a temporary structure, pointing toward the priesthood of Christ, which needed to replace the old cultus.

And so the author of Hebrews (7:11-10:18) shows that God's salvation-history moves along, leaving Canaan and the tabernacle and the old sacrifices behind as inadequate. And the story culminates in the wonderful chapters that focus on the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the Son, and the salvation and glory he brings through his obedient death and ascension to the right hand of God, as the O.T. had predicted. So for all who believe, it all ends in the great "sabbath-rest" with Christ in glory.

The unshakable kingdom

Hebrews shows a glimpse of that glorious end in chapter 12, which repeats the opening theme. The author warns, "See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks!" (12: 25). He is quoting Haggai 2:6 and its reminder that Mt. Sinai shook when God appeared there. God announces his final plan: "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." The result of that shaking, however, is not that all things are annihilated, but "that the things which do not shake may remain." What remains is God's "unshakable kingdom."

Another theme in Hebrews is the battle between the demonic forces of apostasy against the power of the Word of God. The outcome of that battle? God has the last Word. By the dynamic power of his Word, God gains the victory.

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Global/Local

Why genocide is difficult to prosecute

Robert Marquand

The Hague – As public consciousness of the grim situation in Darfur grows, the difficulty of prosecuting what is often popularly called genocide is becoming clearer.

For years, the term genocide was used to describe the ultimate crime. But that crime was rarely – if ever – charged, since international courts were too weak.

Now, the mechanics of international justice are modestly rising to confront man's inhumanity to man: take, for example, the International Criminal Court and the Yugoslavia and Rwanda Tribunals here at The Hague.

Yet at the same time, the political sensitivity surrounding a genocide charge, which requires nations to intervene under international law, is creating friction. The cases of Rwanda, Bosnia, and now Darfur demonstrate this.

Sunday, April 29, protesters in 35 nations and more than 280 US cities marched against what a UN mission calls "apocalyptic" scenes still emerging from the Darfur war, now spreading from Sudan to Chad. Protest groups, including Amnesty International, called on Britain and the US to help create a peacekeeping force.

So is Darfur a genocide? A US Holocaust Memorial Museum committee and Colin Powell have said it is. So do at least two human rights reports. One French expert, Marc Lavergne, calls it "worse than a genocide" since mass killings are not done out of racial hatred, but because Darfurians are simply "in the way" of Sudan's plans to control land.

Yet many Sudanese experts and an International Criminal Court (ICC) don't term it genocide. They say it doesn't fit the 1948 Geneva Convention definition to win a case. This requires absolute proof of "mental intent" to kill or displace based on national, ethnic, or religious identity. Hence, an ICC prosecutor this winter did not charge a Sudanese interior minister and a rebel Janjaweed militia leader with "genocide," but crimes against humanity.

'An explicit call to action'

The word genocide raises deep legal and moral conundrums in a globalizing world, experts say: The term has gained popular usage in a media age to describe mass atrocities, as in Darfur, Rwanda, Bosnia. Yet prosecutors and world courts are ever more cautious about leveling the charge, even when it may apply – since it raises a requirement to intervene.

"Genocide is an explicit call to action under the 1948 treaty, a call to prevent and punish," says Diane Orentlicher at American University in Washington. Recent court rulings show that "if you wait until there is a legal certainty to prove genocide, you have waited too long," she adds.

That's where politics enter. A party or state charged with genocide will likely be isolated and stigmatized in the global community, perhaps even making the situation worse. This is disputed on Darfur. Some Darfur activists feel Sudan hasn't been charged with genocide because that would make it impossible for governments to deal with Khartoum.

The politics of genocide rose in a ruling on Bosnia this February. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague did not find Serbia guilty of genocide in the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims in the early 1990s. Rather, it found Serbia culpable in not preventing genocide in the Srebrenica massacre, and awarded no damages.

The ruling outraged scholars like Ruth Wedgwood of Johns Hopkins University who told the Monitor it "appeared to be a posthumous acquittal of [then President] Slobodan Milosevic for genocide. The court didn't look at a pattern of crimes in Bosnia, but selectively picked its evidence."

Early this month it came to light that ICJ judges did not read and did not seek to investigate a huge range of

Continued on page 13

Eating elephants

Members of an e-mail list-serve that I belong to were lamenting their overly busy lives the other day. Several folks posted lists of the many tasks they were juggling while simultaneously fretting over deadlines and due dates. One woman ended her message plaintively, "Any words of wisdom out there?" Someone responded tongue in cheek with this sage advice: "The only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time."

I smiled knowingly at the old adage. It makes good sense – when you're overwhelmed with work, you need to break it down into manageable pieces. I hate to admit it, but I seem to be on a steady diet of "elephant" lately. And sometimes I bite off more than I can chew. Like dietary roughage, I suppose a certain amount of elephant is beneficial; it keeps things regular. But if all you ever eat is elephant, it's likely to make you feel bloated and fed up. It's enough to make a person whimper, *oh please...not elephant again!*

This is a typically pachydermatous week. (I've been waiting a long time to use that word.) My current to-do-list includes yard work, field work, barn work, housework, paperwork, volunteer work and work on my attitude toward work. My elephants come in many shapes and sizes. They usually sit on my left shoulder, causing my neck muscles to go into spasm.

So when I got up this morning I vowed to think happy thoughts. I made a point of savoring the silence and drinking in the sunshine that spilled so gloriously into our living room. Ignoring the dishes in the sink, I plugged in the coffee maker and passed right by the calendar, dismissing thoughts of the inevitable tax time phone call from the accountant. And I did not allow the fact that our lawn looks like a hayfield to dampen my enthusiasm for spring's arrival.

I very deliberately plunked myself onto the sofa, grabbed my Bible and read for a half hour. Believe me, I'm not telling you this to appear righteous. (That would be silly. Too many people know me too well.) But I am sharing the absolute best strategy I know of to keep my sanity. Daily Bible reading is a worthwhile habit at all times, but especially when there's so much to be done that one actually considers eating elephant. Sometimes when I'm really stressed I read the passages aloud, thereby leaving myself no choice but to listen. Trust me – it's time well invested.

I began to pray and was about to name my elephants one-by-one (as if God needed to be introduced to them), when Prince Farming came in from the field. He had gone out at daybreak to spray some particularly nasty weeds before the wind woke up. Now he was looking for a hot coffee and some breakfast.

We discussed the day's agenda. I would cultivate the field ahead of him, and he would follow with the corn planter. "So are you ready to learn the new tractor?" he said with a happy grin.

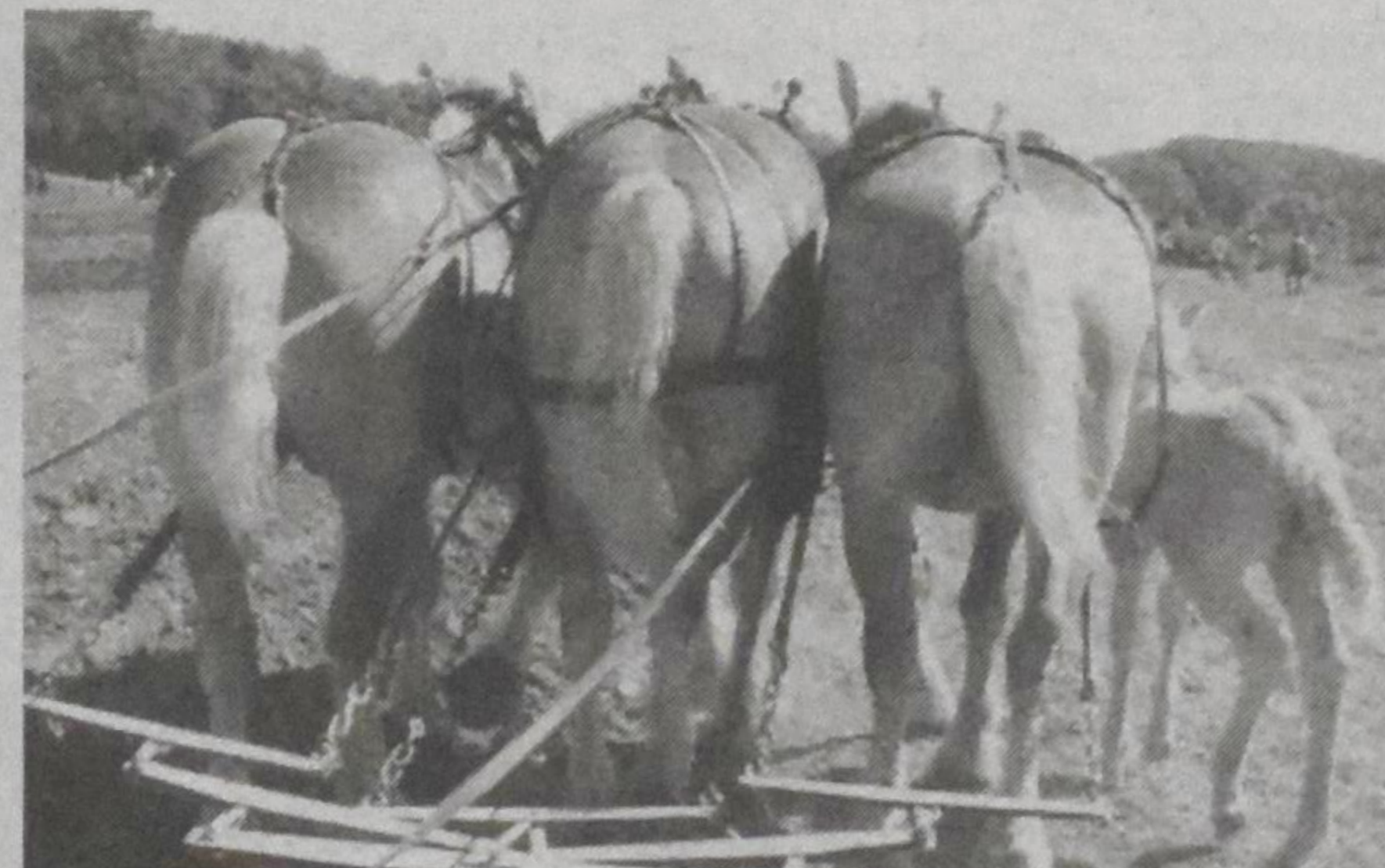
"Oh sure," I said, my left shoulder tightening a little. Keep in mind that I am the woman who took an intensive three-hour workshop just to learn how to use my digital camera. Now he was going to put me at the controls of a 115 horsepower computerized 4-wheel-drive working machine (a machine for which we have recently assumed large monthly payments), dragging an 18-foot cultivator behind it. No problem.

"Couldn't I just drive the John Deere?"

"Nope," he said. "You need the AGCO to pull the

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke



Cheer up – you could have been looking at this

cultivator."

Knowing how this kind of situation can strain even a blissful marriage like ours, I determined to keep my mouth shut, my eyes open, and listen to every word Jack said.

As I climbed up into the cab he patted the "buddy seat" beside him. He had the same excited look in his eyes as he did the night of our first date. He proceeded to show me the start up sequence, where to set the throttle, how to stop and slow down without using the clutch and how to tilt the steering wheel.

"Too much information?" he asked.

I nodded in confused silence. He drove around the field a couple of times, demonstrating how to corner and properly line up with the previous run.

"Your turn," he said. And we switched seats.

After a few rounds he patted my knee. "You okay?"

"Yep. Just focusing."

"This is gonna turn into a story, isn't it?"

"Maybe," I said.

After Jack showed me how to finish off the headlands, we parked the tractor in the next field and came in for lunch.

Walking toward the house I tried to remember what he had said that momentarily prompted a little red warning light in my head. Was it the part about not taking out the neighbor's fence? No. Maybe it was when he warned me not to drive into the river? Nope. That wasn't it, although those were very good tips.

It wasn't until I was making my sandwich and I spotted the latest *Christian Courier* on the table that I remembered what had startled me...the "story!" I rushed to my desk and checked the CC schedule. Sure enough – I had a column due today. Well, at least I had something to write about, and time in the field to think it through.

I started up the tractor without a glitch and put it into gear. It lurched forward, the cultivator dutifully breaking up soil behind me. I chugged happily along, the air-ride seat squeaking with each bump. Catching a glimpse of myself in the rearview mirror, I noticed my shoulders were nearly up to my ears. I took a deep breath and consciously relaxed my posture. Really, this was quite a fun job. It was a beautiful day and this was a marvelous tractor.

Jack waved at me from the back field. I smiled and returned the greeting. Might as well enjoy my God-given elephants as they come along, one bite at a time. It sure beats getting trampled by the thundering herds.

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Mission

Farming, family, and faith

Curt Gesch

A burkha-clad woman enters the hospital compound of a Pakistani village, unnoticed, and gets ready for work. One of the few Pakistani women working in the hospital, you'd think.

Not quite. The burkha in this case hides a blue-eyed, blonde, Canadian farm girl from Quick, British Columbia. Rachel Wisselink. After two years of mid-wifery training at the University of British Columbia, a Canadian service ministry has connected her with a hospital in Tank, Pakistan, for the summer. The burkha is protection from those who would find her a tempting target.

How Rachel ended up in Pakistan is a similar story to how she was chosen for the inaugural class of UBC's first midwifery program. It involves a strong religious faith, a loving family, and years spent on the family dairy farm.

Messy miracles

Rachel grew up tending with a farmyard full of animals. A sow with its yearly litter gave her great enjoyment, until butchering time. From one goat to a paddock of a couple dozen. At various times, a horse (full-size), a miniature horse, ducks, and chickens filled her life with interest, pleasure, and daily chores. Dogs, including one that insisted on biting tractor tires, and barn cats waiting for their daily milk ration.

And of course, the dairy cows and the activities that went with them. Rachel helped in the milking parlour from the age of four. She watched and later assisted with vaccinations, dehorning (messy!), feeding, calves, and – especially – calving.

Rachel's father, John, is known locally as John the Vet, for his knack with cows. For years, he has served as unofficial consultant and emergency birthing expert for his neighboring dairy and beef farmers. And if Rachel was hor-



Rachel with happy mother

rified at butchering time, she was overjoyed to be involved in the messy miracle of birth.

Her love of babies, of all kinds, was fused with her desire to do service or missionary work overseas. Early on, she determined that if she were to go overseas, she would want to be trained in a concrete useful skill.

"I didn't like school," commented Rachel, "so I wanted to go to an African orphanage right after I graduated. However, friends and family commented that 'you need a skill.' I still haven't figured out if you actually need a skill or if they just wanted to keep me here a bit longer."

Care came naturally to Rachel from her mother as well as her father. Rachel's mother, Joanne, also raised on a farm, is also a nurse with a healing manner as well as the requisite skills. Since starting the dairy farm, Joanne has given up her nursing job at the hospital and used her health-care skills in her family, neighborhood and church. Joanne and John have five children, three of whom came through the blessing of adoption. It would be quite natural for Rachel, the oldest, to have a lot of child-care to do as part of her chores. Not so common is her interest and skill in giving each of her siblings their due in love and attention.

Serving in a burkha

Rachel's strong Christian faith undergirded her vocational calling and led her to accept work in challenging locations, like northern Vancouver Island, where the health system is under severe challenges. That same faith led her to work in a hospital in Tank, Pakistan, through a Canadian service ministry. And it was there that the real culture shock took place.

Being a woman, Rachel wore the burkha whenever she went outside the hospital compound. Within the compound,

midwives to go, and that Rachel loved delivering calves and piglets and helping them in their first hours of life."

So off to the University of British Columbia, student body 50,000, went Rachel Wisselink of Quick, B.C. – an unincorporated farming/ranching area with no town centre.

Culture shock is a mild description for Rachel's experience in Vancouver. Even with some family and church connections she felt lost. But she endured, eventually becoming part of a network of friends and colleagues. The course work was hard, the pressure intense, and the temptation to quit strong. But Rachel endured, and – before too long – began her practica. If "pulling calves" was exciting, "catching babies" was euphoric.

Interview with Rachael

Q: Looking back at your Pakistan experience, what is the single most important thing you learned?

A: The need of people to know and have an intimate relationship with Christ spans centuries and countries. People in North America are just as broken and lost as the people in Pakistan and at the base of it all, everyone is looking for love, from other people and from the Creator.

Q: Could you phrase a prayer request for the people in the area of Pakistan you visited? What are their greatest needs (spiritual, social, medical – any) in your opinion?

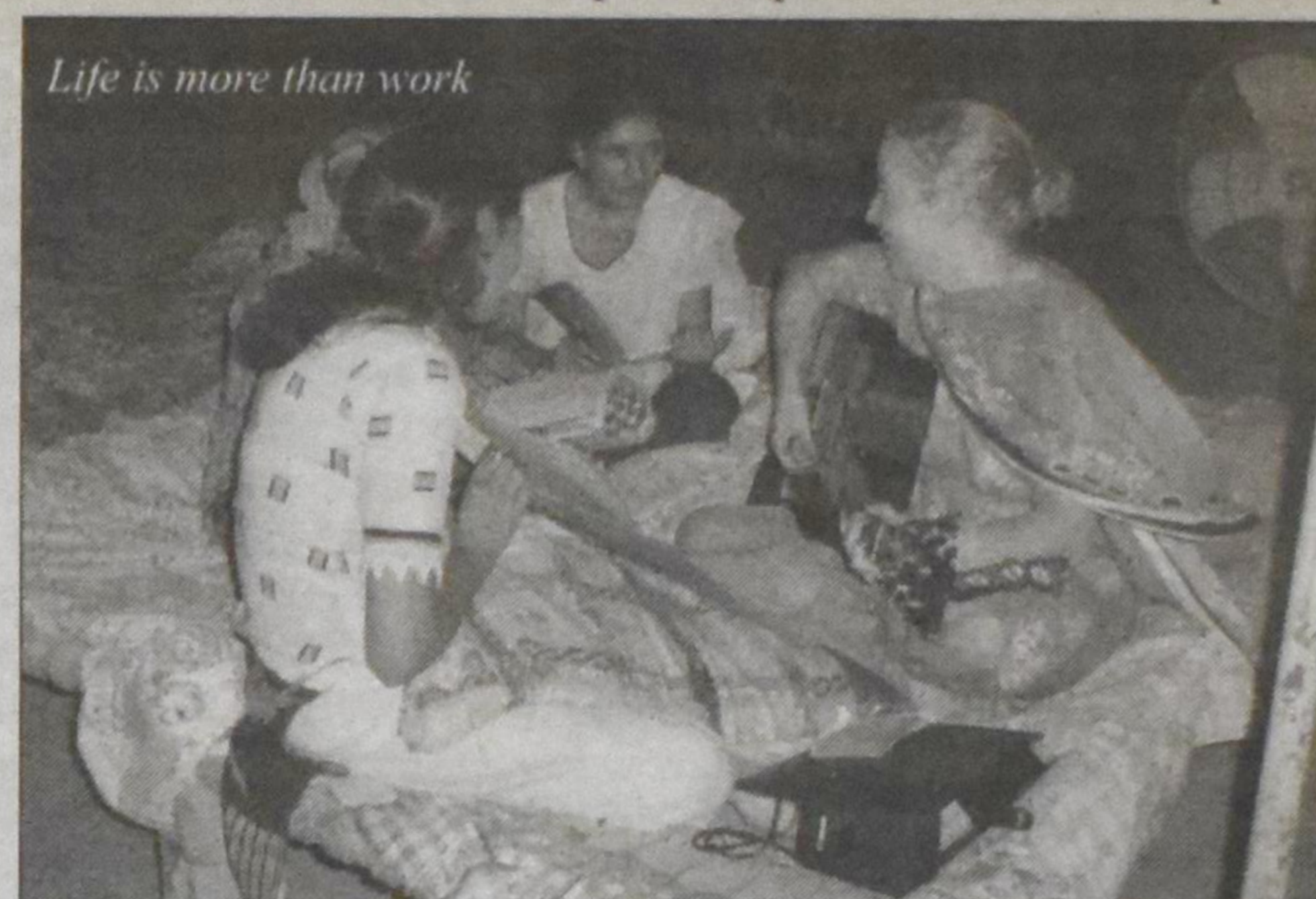
A: That there would be unity among the missionaries and other hospital staff so that together they can change lives, one at a time.

Q: Could you phrase a "thank you" to the people of Pakistan for what they have contributed to your life?

A: Thank you for teaching me that out of brokenness comes healing and restoration, that death is a part of life and that the greater the sorrow, the greater the joy will be.

Q: Describe the joys and sorrows of being a Canadian midwife in Langley, B.C.

A: The over-riding phrase or sentiment often leaves me feeling as though "there's got to be more than this!" It is such a joy to work in a health care system where everything and everyone is right at your fingertips, where there is almost no question that both the mother and child will live. But it pains me to know that the majority of people in the world do not have that. In Africa, only 10 per cent of pregnant women have access to some sort of healthcare. People here have it so good – and they don't even know it.



Life is more than work

From delivering piglets to delivering babies

With these experiences and gifts, no one was too surprised when Rachel let it be known that she would like to be a health-care worker. A few people were surprised when she announced that she wanted to become a midwife. In British Columbia, midwifery is in its infancy as an accepted practice within the current medical system.

Being admitted to the midwifery program demanded qualifications, and farming provided some of them. John Wisselink, Rachel's father, relates the following: "Four hundred students applied for twenty openings! As I talked with the head of the midwifery department, I casually asked why Rachel was selected. She replied that it was a combination of Rachel's grades, a very positive interview, being born and raised in a rural area where the department would like more

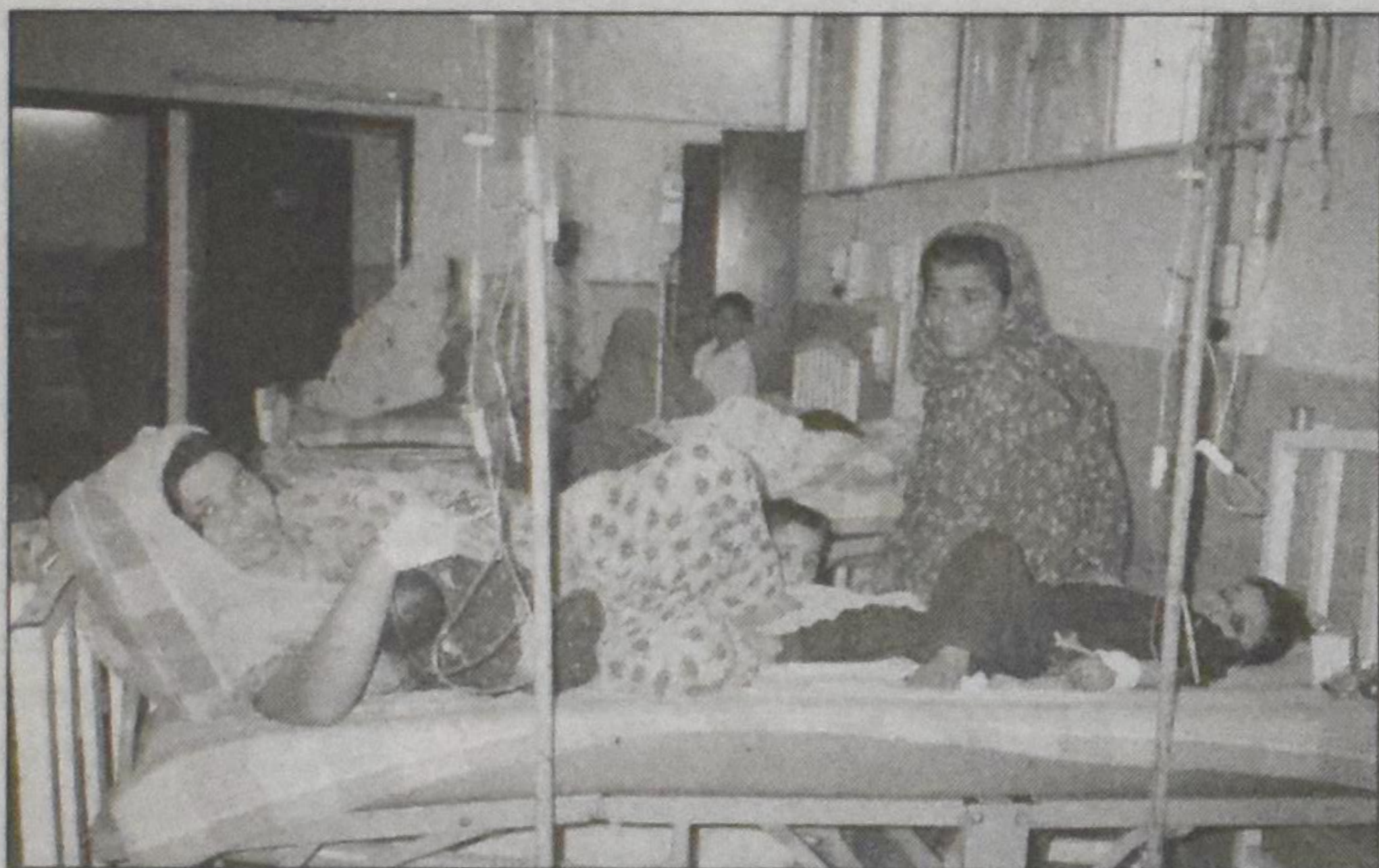
her fair hair and skin, her blue eyes, and her Canadian passport led several local workers to suggest marriage negotiations.

She learned that keeping comfortable in the heat meant three showers a day. Working in the hospital in Pakistan meant checking the floor when getting out of bed to make sure she didn't step on a scorpion. It meant having her blonde hair stroked or her head kissed by women and children. It meant handling requests: "Things I didn't know how to do in a language I didn't understand."

Rachel learned that the Pushtu often live in poverty, but are regal and elegant. Rachel learned that the average woman has 8-12 children, with boys being preferred. Rachel says that she was told that often the boys were fed first because of the preference for sons. In one case, fraternal twins were brought to the hospital: "The boy weighed ten pounds while the girl only weighed six."

Being a woman in health care meant great privileges, opportunities, and challenges for Rachel. When doctors are in short supply, everyone joins in. Supplies are hoarded and carefully recycled.

Mission



Hospital room in Pakistan

tracted belly. Tears fill her eyes as we tell her she really could not have been feeling her baby move; there is no heartbeat. How she must have worked to get that baby where she did: I can see the head, but there he sits, stuck, with the life squeezed out of him, on his way into this world but skipping it and passing straight into eternity.

I see his lifeless purple body lying there on the table. Perfect. Every finger and every toe in place, but no breath, no heartbeat. Gingerly I touch him and

gently place him in the water, washing away the blood, the dirt. His body is here in my hands, but he is not. . . . Why?

Throughout her experience, Rachel has felt strengthened and aided by her faith. She learned that many proverbs are true: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less." And, "the valley of suffering is vale of soul-making."

"Brokenness," says Rachel, "compels us to find a force outside ourselves and leads us to God, whose essential



Rachel off to work in a taxi

Soul-making

Rachel was heartened by pregnant women who simply wanted her to hold their hands, to touch their hair. Rachel also had heart-breaking experiences which she recorded in her journal:

She looks at me, her face contorted in pain as we inspect her con-

nature is love."

The love of farm animals in the context of a caring family and God led Rachel Wisselink to a deep and abiding love for the people of Pakistan, a world away from her rural roots.

Curt Gesch is a retired teacher living in BC.

Why genocide is difficult to prosecute ... continued from page 11

materials from Belgrade that were used as evidence by the UN-sanctioned Yugoslavia Tribunal, just down the street in this city.

New York Times reporter Marlise Simons wrote that the ICJ ruling "raised some eyebrows because aspects of Serbian military involvement are already known from records of earlier [Tribunal] trials.... In late 1993, for instance, more than 1,800 officers and noncommissioned men from the Yugoslav Army were serving in the Bosnian Serb Army, and were deployed, paid, promoted, or retired by Belgrade [and] given dual identities" through a secret office known as the 30th Personnel Center of the General Staff."

ICJ defenders say it is a civil not a criminal court, and that its purpose is to settle disputes between nations to keep amity and peace intact. Critics say the ruling seemed more about conciliation than justice.

"A lot has changed in the past 12 years; the EU is anxious to normalize relations with Serbia," says an American jurist with ties to The Hague, who requested anonymity. "I'm sure there are political pressures. The court probably didn't want to send Serbia back to the 1990s, isolate it, make it a pariah state in perpetuity.... When it came to the legal standard required to prove genocide, the court shrank."

(Serb fugitives Radovan Karadzic and Gen. Ratko Mladic, architects of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, still face genocide charges at the tribunal.)

Tension between peace, justice

UNHCR head Louise Arbour, who as chief prosecutor at the Yugoslav tribunal charged Mr. Milosevic with genocide, told the Monitor that courts should resist politics: "At the end of the day, there's going to be tension between peace and justice. By saying that genocide is a destabilizing charge [to the country accused], you politicize the justice issue," she said. Regarding Darfur, she said, "The UN embraced a responsibility to protect citizens from genocide.... But in Darfur, [head of the ICC investigation Antonio] Cassese looked for three months with a large staff and could find no genocidal intent. He couldn't find a case."

That document, "The 2005 Report of the International

Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the UN Secretary-General," finds that the brutality in Darfur is for "purposes of counter-insurgency warfare."

Yet legal scholar Nsongurua Udombana at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, states bluntly that the Cassese report finds no genocide in Darfur – to avoid an obligation to act.

In a closely argued essay, "An Escape from Reason" in the Spring 2006 issue of *The International Lawyer*, he says Darfur is prima facie far closer to genocide than the report finds.

One conundrum: "It is impossible to determine genocide while it is actually happening," Mr. Udombana says. He adds, "By not calling it a genocide, it appears to make the issue less urgent than it actually is."

Indeed, mass killings can create new on-the-ground dynamics, he suggests: Whether or not precise causes of intent can be determined by outside investigators, still, as rapes and murders continue on their bloody way, war can breed an intent to exterminate on the grounds of group identity.

He agrees with Samantha Powers, author of *The Age of Genocide*, that Darfur has spawned a dynamic in which Arabs are killing Africans, and lighter skinned and darker skinned groups are set against each other. He says a confession by a high ranking Sudanese official isn't needed to prove genocidal intent. It can be shown via a common standard of "practice and pattern" of crime.

Two motives in prosecuting

Mr. Lavergne of the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris says prosecuting mass crimes boils down to two often different motives: an effort to change behavior, or an effort to punish. In the midst of a nightmare like Darfur, he says, a genocide charge may not be the best way to change behavior, though he admits the problem is ambiguous.

He also questions if Darfur is a genocide. The extermination is not aimed at Darfurian identity: "Darfurians who live in Khartoum are not targeted," he notes.

For years "genocide" was a sanctified word, emerging

from the Holocaust, and it defined mass atrocities like the Armenian genocide, or the killing fields of Pol Pot in Cambodia. But its popular use rose in the midst of the Rwanda and Bosnia wars.

French scholar Jacques Semelin, author of the book *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacres and Genocide*, notes that "In Nuremberg, the charges were crimes against humanity. Genocide didn't come into the legal framework until 1948 in Geneva."

Bosnia was an early instance of systematic mass killings in close proximity to a region, Europe, with an incorporated value system based on history that contained an assumption that such crimes would "never again" take place.

Reports of mass killings along the Drina River in 1992, with Bosnian Muslim villages purged and teachers and elders shot, created a dilemma for Europe and the US. The US State Department's initial downplaying of killings and prison camps led one mid-level US diplomat, Richard Johnson, to write "The Pin-Stripe Approach to Genocide" – an early effort to pair the term with an event that seemed to warrant it.

At the time, little notion existed of international courts as a tool to deal with mass crimes. That has changed. The Rwanda and Yugoslavia tribunals, the 1998 Treaty of Rome, the decision of the UN Security Council to empower indictments on Darfur by the ICC, the pressure on Serbia and Croatia to hand over war criminals – have created pressure on regimes to change behavior, though not a preventive one.

For John Packer of Human Rights Internet in Ottawa, the world is in an "awkward moment" between the old Westphalian system of adjudication, "based on sovereign states and designed to create peace and stability between them, and a new developing model of international law."

The ICJ ruling on Bosnia "brings this awkward moment into relief," he says. "The court was caught willfully disregarding evidence showing Serbia's culpability, to avoid being put in a difficult spot."

Robert Marquand is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Sheds/Souls

It pays to have good storage sheds and good equipment



It always amazes me how much money it costs every year to maintain a fleet of farm tractors and machinery. I thought about that the other day when I saw a round baler with a For Sale sign on it parked out at the end of a farmer's lane. Who, I thought, would buy a used baler that's been sitting outside? And what kind of operator would leave a baler outside exposed to rain and sun?

Of all the machines on a farm, combines and round balers are probably the most expensive to operate. The long belts on a round baler are continually going around as it makes a bale of hay. Combines have too many moving parts. When there's a crop to harvest, the farmer has to depend on it to get the crop off. Of course, combines get plugged with big wads of crop going in. Bearings eventually wear out. Belts break.

I take very good care of my round baler. It's a big high-capacity baler. The machine gets a daily check-over when it's being used. It never gets rained on unless I'm in a field baling and get caught in a shower. It's always parked in a shed and is never exposed to the weather.

You have to wonder why some people just leave their equipment sitting outside. Equipment is too expensive as it is.

Machinery costs are a major factor in a farm's profitability. According to Statistics Canada figures, those costs have gone up by 60 per cent since 1986 and can represent anywhere from 30 to 40 per cent of a cash crop farm's total costs.

John Molenhuis, OMAF's business analysis and cost of production expert, in an article in a farm paper, advises producers to be on top of their costs. Know what you're paying in terms of variable costs – which change according to the number of acres cropped – and fixed costs – which don't, he says. Compare that to other options, like purchasing a new piece of equipment, buying something used, leasing or hiring a custom operator to do the work.

Molenhuis says U.S. data indicates farming more acres can reduce machinery costs. But that only works up to a point. While per acre cost dropped off by almost \$10/acre from farming 200 acres compared to 1,200,

there was only a \$3/acre saving when acreage increased to 2,000 acres or more.

In fact, smaller operations can sometimes have lower machinery costs than their larger neighbors. That's because they tend to rent machinery more often or repair older pieces of equipment. That approach, says Molenhuis, becomes riskier on a larger land base.

Custom work is a good option for some producers. Researchers in Kansas and Illinois have estimated that on-farm machinery costs can run up to 25 per cent higher than custom rates.

Molenhuis suggests a dual approach. Use individual farm records to calculate the variable costs like fuel, repairs and labor. These should be allocated according to the number of acres cropped and the number of passes over the field. Using those calculations, you can also break them down by crops, he says.

Fixed costs, like interest and depreciation, are a different matter. He suggests using an available worksheet. These calculation methods are based on standards set out by the American Society of Agricultural Engineering using representative figures from all over North America.

These are available from the OMAF resource. The forms take farmers through the different cost calculations, allowing them to see their own fixed costs.

Molenhuis has done these calculations using hypothetical farm situations and says generally it's more economical to keep and repair your own machinery. Unfortunately it's also the one that has the most risk associated with it. You weigh those savings against the number of acres you have to go over, he says.

For example, a five-day delay in harvest because you're waiting for parts for that old combine could cost you five per cent in yield or as much as \$18/acre. If you apply that to the overall cost of machinery it suddenly makes that new equipment purchase look a whole lot better.

No matter what... it pays to have good storage sheds and good equipment.

Maynard van der Galien runs a beef and hay farm in the Ottawa Valley in Renfrew, Ont.



Alleviation and cure

Lou DeVries

At the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of a local church one of the speakers, a minister from a neighboring congregation, stated that churches should cooperate with all levels of government in their efforts to alleviate undesirable human conditions.

Churches should provide or promote housing for the homeless, food for the hungry, look after the elderly, the disabled etc.

Many would agree that this is a practical way of expressing the message of "Love your neighbor".

Many non-Christians express this same sentiment. They say, "This is what the Bible is all about – so forget about the preaching, we don't need it."

It is true that Jesus cured the sick, made the blind see, the lame walk, provided bread for the hungry and in this way expressed his compassion for people. By doing this Jesus alleviated the symptoms of an underlying disease. Churches most certainly ought to follow Jesus' example in alleviating symptoms.

But in addition they ought to execute the mandate he gave them – to present the message that he, Jesus, provides a cure for the disease that causes those undesirable conditions.

The Bible says that all of us suffer from this disease. As Christians we know that this disease is called sin.

The "undesirable conditions" we experience are a consequence of this "sin-disease".

We should never forget this, and society should be presented with this message, that a cure of a disease trumps alleviation.

The cure for "sin-disease" is having a restored relationship with God.

Although it does not do away with the symptoms, the acceptance of this restored relationship, brought about by the sufferings and resurrection of Jesus does cure this disease. It also fills the emptiness that many are desperately trying to fill with hard work, booze, sex, money and whatever else they can think of. We know that none of those substitutes will do the trick.

Ultimately those who accept the fact that Jesus cured their "sin-disease" are also the ones who will inhabit a new (renewed) earth, where there will be no more symptoms to look after. There are no more symptoms because the disease has been eradicated. It will also be the day that they can sing the hymn written by Fanny Crosby:

*To God be the glory, great things he has done
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.*

Until that time, the symptoms will remain, for Christians as well as for non-Christians. Those symptoms ought to be dealt with by society, including the churches.

There are rumors that some churches are poor participants in such alleviation. Their reasoning seems to be that a spiritual cure is more important than a social cure. And it is. But let's follow Jesus' example, do the one and not forget the other.

Look for opportunities where alleviation can lead to the presentation of The Cure.

Ecclesiastes

Open to every possibility

*Sow your seed in the morning,
and at evening let not your hands be idle,
for you do not know which will succeed,
whether this or that,
or whether both will do equally well.*

Ecclesiastes 11:6

A. A. van Ruler

In the end the Preacher comes to this final conclusion – that man is a creature who acts. He must perform deeds. He must take hold of the world. He has a task to perform in this life. We may even speak of a calling or vocation that fills one's entire life. Man is on the go all his life, from birth to death.

This has little or nothing to do with the eight-hour work-day or the five-day work-week or retirement. For even outside our jobs and our positions in society, we are acting beings. Even those who are chronically ill and spend much of their time in bed must take hold of life in one way or another.

Everyone has an inner orientation and sense of purpose, a reaction to the fact that he is here. This is a world of action. It is obvious in a thousand different ways. Man is constantly active. He doesn't just experience life passively. He doesn't just reflect on it. He does something with it, and this doing is what life is actually about.

The Preacher prods us to constant activity. He says, Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well. The main thrust of this is that we don't control the results of our labors. What we do may succeed. But it may also fail. Therefore we must be constantly busy. If one thing fails, the other may have a chance of succeeding.

So we must not presume to have our lives mapped out. The more irons we have in the fire, the better our chances that at least some will work out. But even then there is no guarantee. Sometimes everything one does seems to end up in failure. But for some everything they do comes up roses.

The Preacher's musings seem to turn life into one of those coin-operated games that challenge you to pick out a prize with a little hand-cranked crane. Young people especially will try again and again to snag a certain prize. When they fail, they think perhaps next time, and at last they may succeed in winning the prize they're after.

Is this what human life amounts to? Is it like playing a game of chance? This is the conclusion that the Preacher arrives at – on the basis of a number of observations.

He observes, in the first place, that there are huge differences in life. Not just in terms of the difference between good and evil in the moral sense of the word, namely that there are things we ought to be doing and others we ought to refrain from doing. But also in the natural sense of the word, namely, in the sense that sometimes things go our way and the wind seems to be in our backs, and sometimes things go against us and we suffer shipwreck. There is prosperity and there is adversity, joy and sorrow, good fortune and misfortune. Some things bring us pleasure and other displeasure.

But isn't that as obvious as the nose on your face? Why belabor the obvious? It seems ludicrously trivial to put such things into words. But it is exceptionally useful to make ourselves fully aware of the most trivial things. Here,



Jean-François-Millet – The Sower

before the face of God, let's remind ourselves that this is true of life – it is comprised of both the pleasant and the unpleasant.

The Preacher adds a second observation. The way things happen seems irresistible, unavoidable, even necessary. When dark clouds gather overhead, they contain rain, and sooner or later we are bound to get drenched. And when a tree blows down, it remains where it has fallen (11:3). There is nothing we can do about it. When the sun shines, the weather is fine and the whole world is merry.

These images are not just borrowed from nature, they also apply to history and to the destiny of individuals. Our lives are not purely of our own making. They also involve a great deal that is beyond our control. Human existence can contain much that is mechanical, thing-like. It is not just about personhood.

The Preacher adds still another observation, his third. We cannot calculate how our lives are destined to unfold. We do not know ahead of time which way the winds will blow. Nor how a child is woven together in the womb. The essence of life's processes and of historical reality are beyond us. They are God's doing. It is in his hands. And God is God. We cannot fathom his ways. We may know a great

many things. We can penetrate ever deeper into the working of reality. But we can never wholly know the beginning and the end, the heart and soul of things.

So we are left with three important observations: first, that reality is a strange mixture; second, that it contains much that is inevitable; and third, that the most fundamental matters are hidden from us.

These three things should not, however, immobilize us, says the Preacher. Those who are constantly testing the wind, which way it blows, which they cannot control, will never get around to planting (11:4). We live in the midst of an unpredictable reality that we do not understand and that we cannot control. Yet, it is this reality that we must take a hold of. We must act. We must intervene in this reality.

What we do is no less real than this reality that happens to us. We must dare to act, and we must be prepared for every pos-

sibility. There will be disappointments, and there will be pleasant surprises. We simply don't know ahead of time. But we must keep our hearts open for all possibilities.

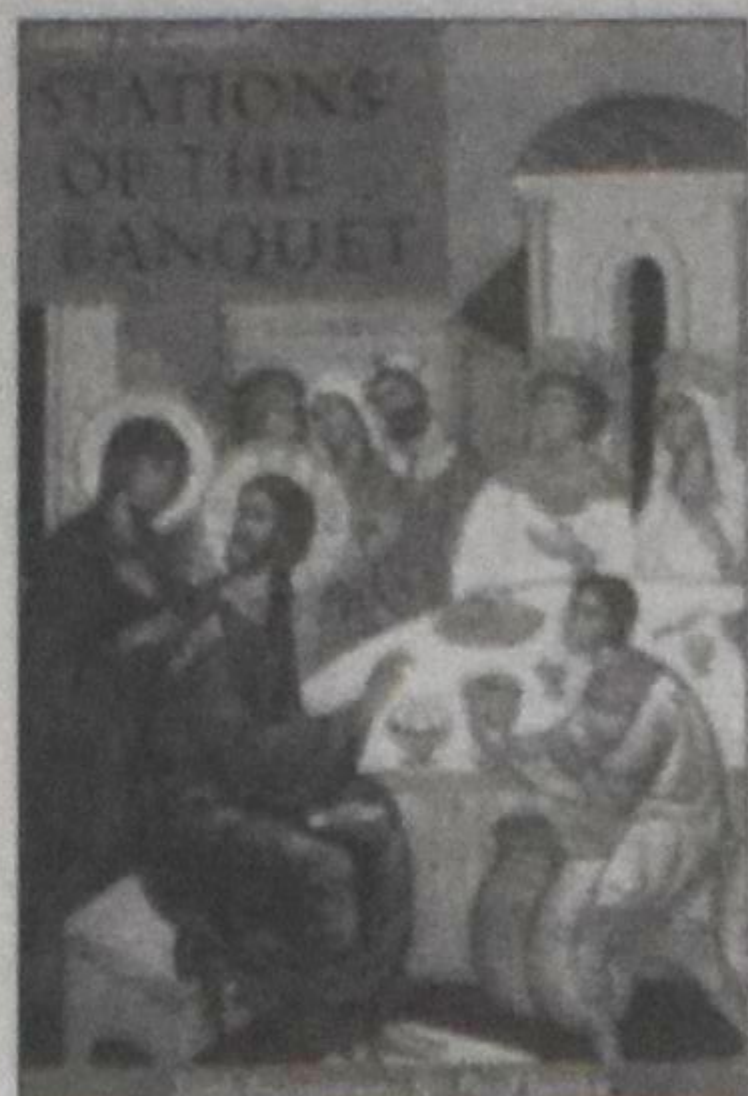
Above all, we must put forth our deeds. If we stop taking action, we will of course no longer be disappointed or surprised. But then all the music will go out of our lives, that is, all piety, all godly fruit and the fear of the Lord will go out of our lives.

We have been given a task, a calling – to stand in the middle of this darkness. We may not wait for the ideal and for perfect conditions before we go to work. Nor must we wait till we have first calculated the outcome and have a guarantee. We must be inwardly ready for every possibility. And we must seize every opportunity that comes our way. In a word, we must go to work within our own narrow boundaries.

Is this pessimism? Is this optimism? Neither label really fits. The best we can say is that it is down-to-earth – a God-fearing down-to-earthness. We must respect our Creator and see the fundamental situation in which we have been placed, and then we must be in our actions what we are created to be.

Book review

The salvation story dished up as a banquet



Stations of the Banquet: Faith Foundations for Food Justice

Cathy C. Campbell (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003)

Reviewed by:
Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Stations of the Banquet emerged from author Cathy Campbell's internal conversation about the relationship between the biblical sisters, Mary and Martha. Too often, Christians have placed Martha, busy preparing physical food for Jesus and her other guests, in opposition to Mary, quietly saturating her heart with the spiritual food of Christ's words, Campbell notes. She invites readers to explore the relationship between our experience with God and our struggle for justice with each other and creation. In order to accomplish this, she "retells the story of salvation with a food-justice lens that we might see it anew and be transformed."

As a priest of the Anglican Church of Canada, food activist, frequent cook, and community organizer, Campbell has spent more than twenty-five years dealing with contemporary food questions, such as: "Why are so many people hungry for food insecure in both developing and industrialized countries?" And "Why, with more wealth, information, and technological capacity than ever before, are these issues so intractable?"

Over time, Campbell realized that there is a foundational spiritual dimension to these questions and many others similar to them. At the same time, she understood that the enormity and complexity of the task of adequately dealing with arriving at just solutions to food issues could easily drain and demoralize individuals and groups attempting to do so, and that it would require "nourishment to sustain and inspire such work."

That required nourishment is the spiritual territory Campbell explores. Believing that "serious reflection on the faith dimension of our lives reshapes our deepest commitments, our ways of being, doing, and thinking about ourselves and the world around us," Campbell provides readers with a structure for profound and active reflection on food issues, integrating the spiritual and physical. Based on the traditional Stations of the Cross – stations which allowed Christians to deepen their understanding of what Christ experienced as he faced crucifixion and God's wrath – Campbell's fourteen Stations of the Banquet invite readers to "the life-enhancing journey of the banquet." As she develops each station, her aim is "to animate conversation and spiritual refreshment that individually and together we may be more fully salt, leaven, mustard seeds in a world crying for God's love and liberation."

Each of the fourteen stations considers a different aspect of the salvation story, beginning at the creation of the universe and ending with the arrival of the new heaven and earth. Station 1, a prose poem which declares the glory of creation, is followed by Stations 2 and 3, which explore the distortion of creation and our relationship to God due to sin. Stations 4 through 8 focus on Christ's presence and his sovereignty over us. The development of Christian hope is the subject of Stations 9 through 13. Station 14 surveys the entire journey.

Structurally each station has four components: Voices of Our Tradition, Spiritual Challenge, Spiritual Practice, and Litany. Therein lies the strength of the book. Multidimensional, it begins by relying on the authority of Scripture (Voices of Our Tradition) to cast light on the nature of the banquet, but doesn't stop there. For each station's theme, it identifies a particular spiritual challenge and the way that the challenge can be addressed by a spiritual practice. Thus, it is practical and relevant for daily life. In conclusion, a litany of praise directs readers' worship to the God of Scripture who invites us to his banquet.

Campbell develops several themes in her book. Let's look closely at the theme she

develops in Station 6. In that chapter she fleshes out the meaning of Jesus' words, "Invite everyone you find to the banquet" (Luke 14:15-24) by asking "What is the table etiquette of God's hospitality?"

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus condemns the "hospitality" of the Pharisees. He reverses deep-rooted patterns of his day by eating with tax collectors and sinners. In fact, the invitation to his table is "open, inclusive, and non-discriminating." Not only does Jesus eat with the outcasts, "the tenor of Jesus' table was joy and fullness to overflowing."

But, Campbell asks, what does that mean for us as his followers? She points out that the invitation, as we are to concretely live it out, is not merely about benevolence – showing kindness and compassion to those who have less – but that we are connected as God's children. In other words, "it is not simply that we care. We are actually kin."

Is this an easy practice for Christians to adhere to and assimilate into their lives? Not at all! From the church's inception, it has struggled with this question: "How open was the table to be?" The religious authorities of Jesus' day, his disciples – think especially of Peter's discomfort with the life-changing vision he received from God about eating unclean food and acknowledging the Gentiles as God's children – and each successive generation up to the present day church has struggled to recognize the sin of exclusion and to submit to the Holy Spirit's reign.

Campbell urges Christians who are coming to a fuller understanding of what the Bible teaches about hospitality and God's banquet invitation to come to terms with the spiritual challenges to solidarity and to embrace the spiritual practice of inclusion. At the same time, she urges them to celebrate the vast differences inherent in the various communities of God's children. In conclusion, she writes, "The open table is built by creating real space for the other, respecting the freedom of the other, being vulnerable, and risking connection and transformation while maintaining distinctness and difference."

Campbell explores several other pertinent themes: the implications of whether "a sense

of security or abundance dominates our emotional and economic imagination"; the challenge Christians face to embrace Christ-like hope in order to oppose a culture, characterized by cynicism and despair, which believes that constructive change is impossible; and the necessity of Christians to seek justice, not individually, but in the context of "communities of transformation."

Anyone involved in food justice issues – deacons, pastors, missionaries, humanitarian aid workers, researchers, farmers, teachers, and others – will find in Campbell's book ideas and resources that challenge, transform, invigorate, and, most all, focus on God, who sent the Living Bread into the world for our redemption and the renewal of his creation.



China...continued from page 6

Chinese leaders fret about rampant capitalism and a parallel 'collapse in values', they prefer any spiritual vacuum to be filled by a quasi-state religion framed around Confucius rather than a potentially dangerous import." There is no room, in other words, for two (or more) ultimate authorities and comprehensive ways of life to coexist in the same place at the same time. A Confucius-blessed, communist-capitalist way of life ordained by a government that subordinates every other way of life to its own, is nothing less than a religious way of life.

Those of us who live in the United States and other western countries may be quick to

say how terrible it must be to live in a country with so little freedom to practice different religions. But we should pause to reflect for a moment. Don't most of us agree to practice our diverse religions privately in ways that will support (or at least not interfere with) the continued progress of the American way of life? In our case, an authoritarian government may not exert the kind of control that the Communist Party exerts in China, but don't we, through democratic majorities, readily vote for or submit to whatever policies Congress and the president say are necessary to keep America Number One and to keep the economy growing? Is it not an American civil

religion, rather than Christianity or any other privately practiced religion, that marks out the path of life for most Americans?

Religions, not all of which are oriented to a transcendent deity, direct entire communities and whole societies along paths of life (or death) toward their intended goals. The religions of nationalism, socialism, liberalism, Islamism, and democratism appear to be the dominant religious faiths today. Some of the privately practiced religions may be seeding the soil for greater public influence in the future, but none of them appears to be carrying the day in many, if any, parts of the world.

James W. Skillen is president of the Washington-based Center for Public Justice

At the start of CPJ's (Center for Public Justice) 30th anniversary year, it launched a new commentary under the title "Root and branch." It focuses on the vitality of religions in today's world and their influence in society. The columns seek to show that religions typically function not as one variable among others but as the root from which life's branches grow and on which they continue to depend. See <http://www.cpjjustice.org/rootandbranch> for other articles.

Reflections

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

I've been thinking about the multiplicity of religions, the multiplicity of gods, in our modern world. If you were to ask 10 of your Canadian neighbors and I were to ask 10 Americans if they believe there is just one true God (and thus, one true religion), how do you suppose they would respond? It would depend, of course, on whether your neighbors are Reformed or some other stripe of orthodox Christian. (Or would it?)

For some time now, from the various media, from public schools and various other self-described secular institutions, we North Americans (not to mention Europeans) have been given the message that it is definitely not ok any more for us Christians to believe that we worship the one true God, or that there *is* one true God. We're all equal, and so is truth. You're ok; I'm ok. You believe your thing, I'll believe mine. Whatever gets you through the day without hurting someone else is fine.

Why spoil the party by insisting that there is something so insidious as Truth with a capital T, and that the "Christian God" embodies it, and we had all better take heed of it? (Besides, don't you Christians know that your religion has wreaked havoc in the world for centuries?) The kind of Christianity that takes seriously, even literally, the kind of stuff that Christians used to believe about "their" god is deeply offensive in the modern age – you know, all that stuff that's in the Bible (especially the Old Testament). It's exclusionary; it even leads to a fanaticism that causes religious wars and religion-based terrorism. Just who do you think you are? What makes you think that *your* God the true God and other gods (and by extension, their worshipers) are so much chopped liver?

Give account of your hope

Though people who convey those attitudes to us Christians aren't usually waiting around for us to respond, we do need to be ready to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have," Peter tells us (1 Peter 3:15). "But do this with gentleness and respect," he adds, "keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (v. 15b-16).

We need to be seen as living examples of commitment to the living God. The idea that God-is-just-one-of-many is far more than semantics or part of a dusty theological debate. The living God who swiftly, spectacularly answered Elijah on Mount Carmel while the pagan Baal sat in impotent silence is no less willing now to share his God-ness with imposters as he was then. We who are committed to his worship and service should be keenly aware of that (though we don't always live as if he is the only God). God's jealous guarding of his own name and person as *the* God, requiring our whole hearts

and lives, is seen as pretty extreme for the 21st century, and, initially, is also hard for those who newly come to him and do want to serve him. But if God is not *the* God, he is no god at all.

There's no getting around it. We might tell our critics that the God of the Bible – the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, John and Paul, the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" – is the God who tells us, "I am the LORD your God.... You shall have no other gods before [besides] *me*" (Exodus 20:2-3). That, as CC readers know, is the First of the Ten Commandments. And again God says of himself: "The LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King" (Jer. 10:10). Our critics won't like the last part of that verse any better: "When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.")

Though the Ten Commandments are still acknowledged in the secular world as worth reading and keeping (just don't display them on government property in the U.S.), the secular world has use for only at most eight out of the ten. There's just no really good way to secularize that First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." Nor the Second: "You shall not make for yourself an idol...." So they simply have to be thrown out.

Rewards for service

We might do well to point this out to those who say that we act like we own God: God is not the one true God because he is *our* God; he is *our* God because he *is* the one true God. He says he is, and we have chosen to believe him, and then to serve him. You are free to do the same, we should tell our critics (and we'll pray that you will). You will experience Freedom when you do; and you'll discover that not only is there such a thing as true Freedom, but ultimate Truth, too; and comfort and peace, and a host of other good things. God is not shy about rewarding those who love and serve him! "Because he [or she] loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation" (Ps. 91:14-16). However, God expects us to reinvest in his service the rewards he gives us for our love and fidelity to him; he then submerges us in a wonderful, ongoing, ever-widening and -deepening pool of blessings.

There are many passages like the one in Psalm 91; Jesus himself tells us, "Ask" [with the right motives] and you will receive." Yet we're so easily distracted. Despite God's numerous promises of blessing and reward for wholehearted service to him, we fear the cost. We don't like to seriously suffer; we even anesthetize ourselves against headaches, sore muscles and paper cuts.

There's also a cost

But there *will* be a cost if we follow him faithfully. We're guaranteed it. That's one of the biblical guarantees we'd like to, and usually do, ignore. It comes along with the blessings. In fact, it *is* one of the blessings! Yes, we're supposed to consider ourselves *blessed* when we suffer for standing up for righteousness. It's not just a state of mind. We *are* blessed when we suffer on account of God's name: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Jesus told his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), and he says it to us too.

Then he turns it up a notch: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." Not only are we blessed if that happens, but for some of us, it will be part of our calling, a God-ordained and continuing *privilege*: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil. 1:29).

There's more. God has in mind a certain number of saints (us, his people) who will be, must be, martyred for Christ's sake, and Christ will not return as Judge and LORD until that number is completed: "When [the Lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed" (Rev. 6:9-11).

That, too, is part of the reality of worshipping the one true God. He demands our devotion. But it is not so hard a thing, really. No, let me restate that: it *is* hard for us to carry our crosses. A cross, after all, is literally a heavy, splinter-filled instrument of torture and death. Spiritual crosses can be, may be, just as deadly – to the body, anyway. That path can be very hard. But it is not difficult in that hardship recedes because Christ is able to, and does, make our burdens light. He turns whatever we suffer for his sake – trauma, agony, grief, abuse, other persecution or even death – into jewels in our crown of life. Stephen, described as "a man full of God's grace and power," and one who "did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (Acts 6:8) was on the bloody brink of martyrdom and the first Christian to die in Christ's service for saying things his audience didn't want to hear. At that moment heaven opened before him and he saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Would any of us need greater assurance that our suffering is of great and lasting worth?

The wide road to destruction

Sadly, there is a part of Christendom which is accepting the lie that a good and loving God and a truly divine Jesus just doesn't expect that of us any more. He apparently used to be demanding, but this just isn't the time for it. Christians being people who (theoretically) don't like to cause offense to others, we now find ourselves in a situation in which many of us with the name Christian are even afraid to admit the truth of what the Apostle John says about the One whose Name we bear: "We are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). Or we think that that Son and True God was not really serious (or he was mistaken) when he said about himself, "No one comes to the Father but by me"; or when he prayed to the Father: "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

There are entire Christian denominations who have decided on God's behalf that he didn't really intend Jesus to be the only way to bridge the awful gap between himself and us; and we certainly needn't worry about him judging us. It has become easier and far less offensive to conclude – perhaps even out of laudable, compassionate intentions – that whatever religion someone espouses and whatever god is worshiped is ok as long as people appear to be trying to do the right thing. All roads lead to GOD in the end any way.

That's a comforting thought, at least it is in a superficial kind of way. Who wants to wish eternal punishment on their well-meaning neighbors because they are hockey fanatics instead of "God fanatics"; or on equally well-meaning people halfway around the world who (still) worship gods of wood, iron and stone? God will surely see their hearts; he's a loving God. Yes, he will, and he is. But that kind of thinking comes from Satan, not God. It's a ploy to get us not to take God seriously. And to get us to forget about being his witnesses. If God doesn't need to be taken seriously, neither does our service to him (and neither Scripture, the primary means through which he speaks).

Do not weary of doing good

God, however, tells us over and over who he is and why he created us. And if you ignore him you won't escape his judgment. We're doing our neighbors no favors if we soft-peddle that truth. For most of us readers here our problem is not one of dismissing God or his Word; it is not blatant unbelief, or unbelief of any kind. Rather, we "become weary of well-doing," as the King James Bible puts Paul's words (Gal. 6:9). But in the context Paul is offering encouragement against that. He says, "Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do

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Relationships

What does grace have to do with it?

...love...by its own innate structure pressures toward maturity and pushes us beyond romantic infatuation and illusion. All love eventually programs its own dark night of the soul and this is healthy.

Roll Rolheiser, OMT column

We have a lovely new white picket fence in our back yard, designed and constructed by my spouse. I visualized this fence ever since we bought our 'empty nester' home seven years ago. Finally, the dream has become a reality.

Of course, we now have the pitter and patter of six little pair of feet to worry about – and the seventh on its way – which hastened the necessity of the fence to keep the little ones safe from the rippling waters of our backyard lake. Still, I appreciate the effort that went into its craftsmanship. I, of course, knew my spouse was talented and often made a point of this in my arguments with him. At the same time, I do not take it for granted and am pleased as punch with the final product. And so, the fence, for me, has become a physical reminder to heap an abundance of 'grace' upon my spouse so our relationship continues to flourish.

Experiencing grace

The funny thing is, we as Christians often believe our faith will keep us on the straight and narrow. And it does...most of the time. But we are human and we make mistakes. My spouse and I found this out early in our marriage and looking back it was a great lesson to learn that kept us mindful of the need for grace as time went on. On the other hand, I think we are not really aware of an important component that makes human grace a healing balm for marital relationships.

To have a healthy understanding of grace we may want to know what it is not. Grace is not putting up with emotional, physical or sexual abuse of any kind. Grace is not accepting ongoing destructive anger, disrespect, or indifference. Grace is not being "selfless" or a "doormat" so the other partner does not mature. Grace is not turning a blind eye to extra marital affairs. Grace is not trying to please people all the time without asking for anything in return. In other words, grace is not sacrificing ourselves so others do not need to grow. And sometimes...grace is to confront whether we like it or not.

I recently attended the play 'Grace' by Craig Wright, who is also a writer for the acclaimed HBO series "Six Feet Under" and more recently for "Brothers and Sisters." In his play Wright looks at questions of faith, God's will and time through the lives of a young evangelical couple, Steve and Sara. For me, the irony of the play was the character of Steve, who had an inflexible belief about who God is

and how God worked in his life, while those around him where not as certain and were more open to possibilities. Unfortunately, when things did not work out for Steve, he had nothing to hold onto because he firmly believed God was supporting him in his plans. Consequently, he never looked at *himself* as a possible source of the problem and eventually projected all his anger on those around him with disastrous results.

What also struck me was that through Steve's commitment to live 'rightly,' he never allowed *himself* to see his own vulnerabilities or shortcomings. To do so would open a Pandora box of insecurities and fears about not 'measuring up', not being 'adequate' or 'feeling like a failure.' At the same time, had he confided in his wife Sara, she would have understood and not hesitated to douse him with heavenly grace, allowing their relationship to become stronger in the process.

Such is the reality of grace. But we don't often hear about this important component. What we are told is that grace ought to be given often and freely. What we need to hear is that to experience true grace we need to *acknowledge and take responsibility* for our failures and shortcomings. This process will encourage us to accept our humanness, which in turn allows us to accept the humanness of others more readily and consequently offer grace more freely.

Conclusion – late life divorces

I introduced my first instalment on late life divorces with three quotes from 'letters to the editor' from the MacLean's magazine. The editorial board chose wisely since all quotes had an element of truth in them. Feminism or the equality of woman has increased the itchiness of marriage (as it should), and, yes, learning about and practicing 'reciprocal empathy' will greatly enhance the marital relationship. Also, seeing marriage as a gift from God is about valuing and appreciating the institution. Maintaining the gift, of course, can be hard work, but it is often worth it. And, third, we do

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove



have to grow up to have healthy marriages, the difficulty is that both spouses have to be into it for the relationship to flourish.

I also noted contemporary marriages are burdened with the unrelenting responsibilities of emotional intimacy and personal fulfillment. This is so because we expect too much from the marital relationship. We cannot be happily married if we are not happy with who we are as people. In other words, how can we be happy together if we are not happy alone? Furthermore, our script for marriage is far too limited, and it traps us when we do not have the courage or creativity to implement an alternative way of being. We need to broaden the marital map and allow more freedoms in our quest for personal maturity so that ultimately we can give more to our families and communities.

The marriage of Trent Fraye and June Callwood comes to mind in this regard. June, who recently died at the age of 82, has often been called Canada's Mother Theresa or Canada's conscience because of her work for civil rights. She successfully balanced her professional life with marriage and family. Both June and Trent had challenging work throughout their marital life, yet they continued to be committed to raising a family as well as being there for one another.

I could not help but chuckle when in one of her last interviews I heard her describe their marriage: "Yes, there are stages of course, first there is the romantic stage, which does not last very long (chuckle), then there is the busy stage with children, and then there is a time of irritability and annoyance. But after that there is the tender stage which is worth hanging in for." I think we all could have learned from this extra-ordinary couple.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca



Continued from page 17

not give up."

There is it again: a reward for perseverance, for whole-hearted commitment. We will not only get our reward, but that "harvest" will consist of the lives of those our witness has touched and our words, through the Spirit of God, have changed. Then one day each of us, too, will see the living Jesus standing at the right hand of the living God, and we will hear his words: "Well done good and faithful servant."

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@adelphia.net or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com



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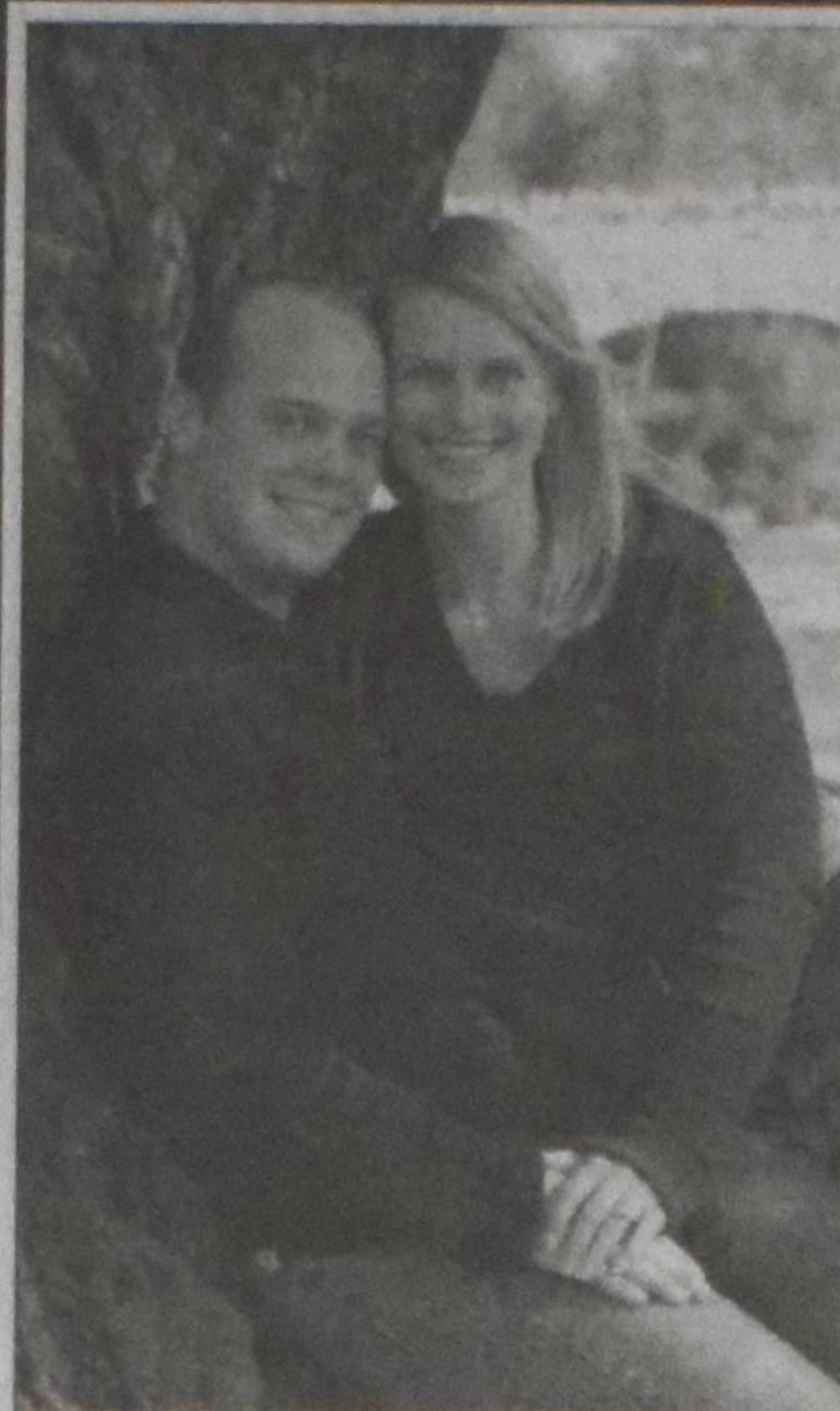
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Classifieds

Engagement



Praising the LORD for his wonderful blessings

John and Marge Postuma and
Harold and Mieke Groen

are thrilled to announce the
upcoming marriage of their children

Sarah Danielle and Ryan Neil

Congratulations, Ryan and Sarah!

Classifieds

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Anniversaries

1942 May 15 2007

"Great is Your Faithfulness"

With much joy and thankfulness to the Lord, we are happy to announce and celebrate the **65th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

CORNELIS AND DIEUWKE KUIPERS (nee Feenstra)

Happy Anniversary Dad and Mom!
May our faithful God continue to bless and keep you and be near you both.

Much love from:

Evelyn & Ben Klumpenhower
Femmie & Henry Tibben
Grace & George Tibben
Clara & Harry Bierman
Jake & Joyce Kuipers
Sidney & Margaret Kuipers
Roselyn & David De Kleine
and grandchildren and great-grandchildren

An **Open House** will be held on Sat. May 19, 2007 at the Bethel Christian Reformed Church, 117 Windsor Dr., Brockville, Ont. from 2-4 p.m.

Home address: 1266 Brockmount Place
Brockville ON K6V 5Z7

PIET AND AUKTJE OOSTERHOFF (nee Bosch)

Wedding text: Psalm 23:1

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

On May 29, 2007 the Lord willing we hope to celebrate our parents' **60th Wedding Anniversary**.

We join with them in thanking God for his faithfulness and pray that he will continue to be near them in the years ahead.

With love from their children & grandchildren

Ria & Lies Albert & Donna
Anieta & Ben Rayner
Aurelia & Ray Clarence & Evelyn
Linda & Koos Harry & Lori

There will be an **Open House** at Faith Reformed Church in Telkwa, BC on Tuesday May 29, 2007 from 2-5 p.m.

Home address: 22709 Woodmere Road
Telkwa BC V0J 2X2

Obituaries

Aalten 1934 2007 Aalten

The Lord called home our dear brother and uncle

GERRIT NEERHOF

age 73

Mien (Gerritt) Kleyn Hesselink, *Clinton, Ont.*
Leis (Bernhardt) Neerhof, *Aalten, Holland*
Francis (Joe) Neerhof, *Owen Sound, Ont.*
John & Audrie Neerhof, *Chatsworth, Ont.*
Shena & Hank De Boer, *Chatham, Ont.*

Nieces & Nephews

We mourn but not as those who have no hope, for Jesus has said:

"I am going there to prepare a place for you."

John 14:2b

November 15, 1931 April 26, 2007

Called to his eternal home with the Lord,

JOHN MIEDEMA

beloved husband for over 50 years of Betty (nee Koopman), and the father of Peter & Cathy Miedema, Loren Miedema, and Bonita & Ivar Hanson. John was also a wonderful pake to Jon, Eric, Matt and Amy Miedema, and to Anton, Erika, Daniel and Even Hanson. He will also be missed by siblings, other relatives and many friends.

As we lift up our eyes to the days ahead we are comforted by the help that comes from the Lord. (Ps. 121) This was also John's only true comfort throughout his life but especially in the last half year since he was diagnosed with inoperable cancer.

A funeral service was held on May 1, at the Crosspoint CRC of Brampton.

Correspondence address: B. Miedema, PT 404
45 Kingknoll Drive, Brampton ON L6Y 5P2

1947 Aalten



2007 Trenton

We are happy to announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of

PETER AND HENNY VAN ESSEN
(nee Wikkerink) on May 29, 2007

Congratulations and love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:

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Patrick & Annissa, *Robin*
Gerrit & Cathy Van Essen, *Lakefield ON*
Miranda, Sherrill & Andrew (Katherine),
Andrew & Shelley (Caleb, Emily, Drew), *Timothy*
John & Marilyn Van Essen, *Simcoe ON*
Peter & Sharon Van Essen, *Cobourg ON*
Daniel, Rebecca & Ryan
Herbert & Dianne Van Essen, *Pembroke ON*
Jason, Sarah

We invite you to celebrate with us at an **Open House** on Saturday June 2, 2007 from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. at Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church, Fourth Ave, Trenton ON (Best wishes only please)

Correspondence: 110 Hillcrest Terrace, 20 Fourth Ave, Trenton ON K8V 5N3

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Open House from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Dinner Celebration begins at 6:00 p.m.

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Interested candidates should apply in confidence by May 18th to:


Chief Executive Officer

Parkview Meadows Retirement Village,

72 Town Centre Drive, Townsend Ontario N0A 1S0

Fax (519) 587-5692, e-mail: tknight@parkviewmeadows.ca

We thank all applicants for their interest.
Only those selected for an interview will be contacted.



DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS), Ontario's oldest and largest independent school organization representing 82 non-denominational Christian schools, is seeking to appoint a suitable candidate for its senior management team. We are inviting applications for the position of:

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One dimension of the OACS mission is to keep Christian school costs affordable through a variety of financial services, utilizing innovative economies of scale.

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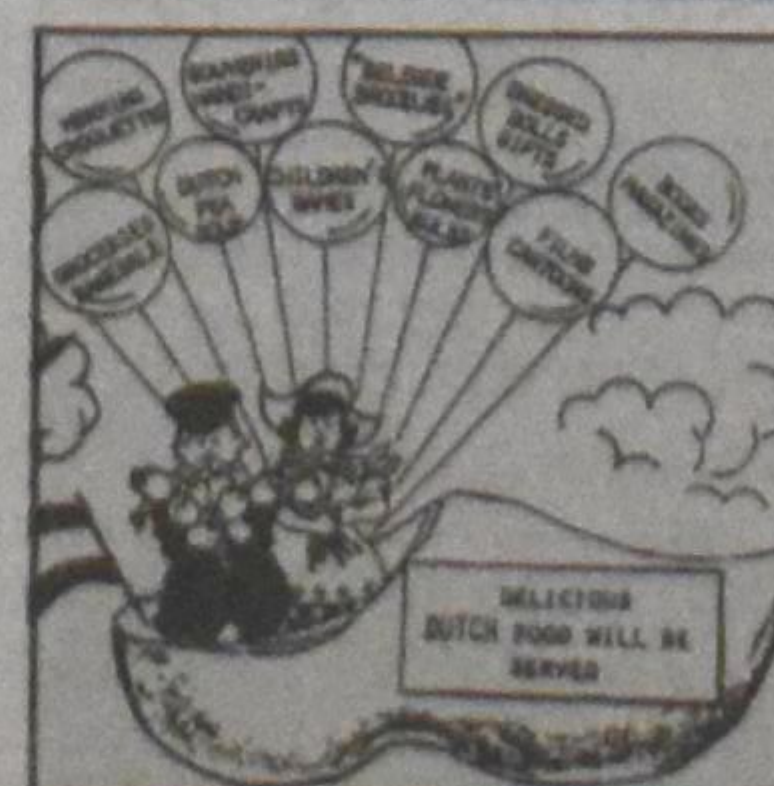
Suitably qualified Christian applicants are invited to apply before May 31, 2007. Resumes and supporting references should be sent to:

Dr. A. Guldmond, Executive Director
Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
617 Garner Road, E.,
Ancaster ON L9G 3K9

Informal inquiries can be made to the Executive Director at adriang@oacs.org.



www.oacs.org



NETHERLANDS BAZAAR

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Sid Vander Meulen (centre)
of Ada Realty

A member of the Edmonton Real Estate Board had a special celebration this week. Mr. Sid Vander Meulen celebrated his 50th anniversary as a landed immigrant to Canada. Because this is so special to him, he plans to walk the 205 km Elfsteden, the eleven city walking tour in his home province of Friesland in Holland. This effort is Sid's tribute to those Canadians who gave their lives to liberate Holland in 1944-45, an occasion engraved in Sid's, as well as the memory of many Dutch citizens.

Sid hopes to raise \$50,000 for Edmonton's School Lunch Program, an organization Sid has been involved with and supported for several years. The program provides a warm lunch for 2,300 children in 12 high need schools every day of the school year.

"What a joy it is and satisfaction it gives to be able to assist in providing lunch for the grand- and great-grandchildren of those who liberated us. God bless Canada!", Sid said.

Pledges and support for Sid's Walk can be made to the Edmonton Realtors' Charitable Foundation at 14220-112 Avenue, Edmonton AB T5M 2T8. Receipts will be issued for donations of \$10 or more.

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Did you know, in December 2006,
The Netherlands Bazaar raised enough funds to distribute 408 food parcels plus 10 Food Gift Certificates
and give 80 disadvantaged children the opportunity to attend camp.
On behalf of the committee, Thank you

Classifieds

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 19, 20 Georgetown CRC 50th anniversary celebrations. See ad this issue for details or email: info@gcrc.on.ca. Website: www.gcrc.on.ca

May 26 Laurentian Hills Christian School 40th anniversary, 11 Laurentian Dr, **Kitchener**, ON Dinner, program, \$15/person. To reserve by May 1st., call Mrs Grift 519-576-6700 or Mrs. Olthoff 519-742-5152. Check the web site for more details at www.lhcs.ws

May 28- June 1 "A Vacation with a Christian Perspective" ~ The annual Milk & Honey Summer Festival at Redeemer University College will be held **May 28 - June 1, 2007**. This unique vacation offers a week of relaxation as well as cultural and spiritual stimulation. Highlights include guided tours, banquets, informative lectures, fellowship and entertainment. Join Dr Bert Polman and Professor Ray Louter as they explore the theme "*Psalm of Lament and Psalm of Rejoicing*." For more information or to register, call 905-648-2139 ext. 4521.

June 2 Retirement celebration for Arie Vanderstoel, principal, **Dunnville** Christian School. See ad page 21 for details.

June 9 Liberation Choir in Concert, 8.00 pm Compass Point Bible Church-Kerns Rd. **Burlington**. A Fundraiser for Drummond House. See ad below.

June 9, 10 The First Christian Reformed Church of Kemptville 50 year celebration. Banquet on June 9 and worship service on June 10. Contact Harmen Boersma (613-258-5565).

June 13 Hollandse Dag 10 a.m. at the Moorefield Community Centre. Details in May 14th issue or phone Hilbert Rumph at 1-519-638-2053.

Sep 29 Netherlands Bazaar, **Thornhill** Community Centre. Details in following issues.

De acht en dertigste (38)

HOLLANDSE DAG word gehouden

Woensdag **13 Juni 2007** op **10 uur** in de **Moorefield Community Centre**

Intree: \$10.00 per persoon

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Contact Cloud of Witnesses at 616-241-1679 or www.synodcloudofwitnesses.org for more information, including lodging. Tax deductible contributions to support this witness may be made as follows: In the USA: Classis Grand Rapids East, 1239 Fuller SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506; In Canada: Jubilee Fellowship CRC, 13 Willholme Drive RR3, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P9.



G C R C

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For more information, please contact us at info@gcrc.on.ca or call **905-877-4322**

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News

Celebrating Jamestown at 400

This month Americans are celebrating the 400th anniversary of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in North America. The continent was not yet divided into Canada and the U.S. at the time, of course, so the establishment of the English colony is as much part of the early history of Canada as it is of the U.S. The first permanent colony in what is now Canada was established in 1605 only two years before Jamestown – by the French in Port Royal, Nova Scotia by Champlain. The first English settlement to survive in Canada was created in Cuper's Cove, Newfoundland in 1610.

Subsequent history makes the Jamestown settlement part of American history and Cuper's Cove part of Canadian history, but this kind of nationalism distorts the past, for neither Jamestown nor Port Royal can be understood apart from one another. Both are part of the single history of the settlement of this continent by Europeans and part of the rivalry between England and France.

HdN

The precise location of the Jamestown settlement was discovered only 13 years ago, when an archaeologist was exploring an area along Virginia's James River and found what had been considered lost forever. The find has helped turn May's 400th birthday bash for Jamestown into a realistic look at the early origins.

Like the dig itself, which has so far found about 1 million artifacts, Americans are still scratching for the truth about Jamestown, reflected lately in new histories. Dozens of events were planned for the commemoration,



The baptism of Pocahontas by John G Chapman

including a visit by Queen Elizabeth II.

The effort is largely driven by Virginia's attempt to raise Jamestown as high as the "Pilgrim story" of Plymouth in American history-telling. Like its first 100-plus colonists, Virginia hopes to reap bounty from exploitation – only this time in tourism.

And therein lies one aspect of America reflected in early Jamestown: unabashed commerce, including the first import of black slaves into America and the mass

export of a noxious weed, tobacco.

The settlement also set other patterns: a model for English colonization around the world, a form of republican government, the right and wrong ways to deal with indigenous peoples, a culture of violence, and, most of all, an ongoing American tension between liberty and license – seen, for instance, in Thomas Jefferson's ownership of slaves. At its 300th anniversary, Jamestown was called "the blessed mother of us all" by Teddy Roosevelt.

The freedom of the New World let loose the best and worst of its settlers. "Here every man may be master of his owne labour and

land," wrote Capt. John Smith, who saved the colonists from their own ruin and from the Indians. He was the most important Englishman in the Americas until the Pilgrims landed 13 years later. Yet his name is stuck in a dubious myth about a romance with Pocahontas.

Why does America need such foundation myths? The answer lies in the first generation after the American Revolution. With official ties broken with the Old World, white Americans looked for past models to create a unique future and impress immigrants, Indians, and blacks with their civic and social values. Rather than pick Jamestown with its record of unruly and greedy men living in violence, they chose the Pilgrims (and Puritans) for their piety and fortitude. Plymouth became the church side of America; Jamestown its selfish, commerce side.

But Virginia has also tapped into that pious side, largely because of the 400th anniversary. In February, its lawmakers issued the first official state apology for slavery and the exploitation of native Americans by the country's white settlers.

Indeed, Jamestown's colonists were really indentured servants whose English masters found their gold in tobacco. The hard work and near-slave arrangement set the stage for black slavery in America.

The apology is another example of Americans looking to history to shape the present. They find a constant need to strip away old concepts and find the underlying reality. The adventurous Smith referred to an "abounding America."

The Jamestown charter

King James I (sponsor of the King James translation) granted the royal charter for the group of 150 men that set out to colonize Virginia. It stated the purpose of the colony in terms of a mission:

We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of His Divine Majesty, in propagating of the Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages living in those parts to human civility and to a settled and quiet government, do, by these our letters patent, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended desires.

Upon their landing at the Jamestown site, the pastor with the group called the

settlers to three days of prayer and fasting in repentance for sins and in preparation for dedicating the new land to God.

Despite this piety, many of those who had come to Jamestown expected to become wealthy overnight with little or no effort. They were not prepared to work and many died of starvation.

Captain John Smith, disgusted with the quality of the colonizers, famously declared: "You must obey this now for a Law, that he that will not work shall not eat (except by sickness he be disabled:) for the labors of thirty or forty honest and industrious men shall not be consumed to maintain an hundred and fifty idle loiterers."

For a website that seeks to celebrate Jamestown in terms of the Christian heritage of America, see: <http://www.christianlaw.org/newsletter/articles/jamestown.html>

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